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The Stonement of Team Dundas.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER XVII.

UNWORTHY.



THE storm had passed with the night, and the day was bright and joyful ; almost hard in its brightness and cruel in its joy ; for while the sun was shining overhead and the air was musical with the hum of insects and the song of birds, the flowers were broken, the tender plants destroyed, the uncut corn was laid as if a troop of horse had trampled down the crops, and the woods, like the gardens and the fields, were wrecked and spoiled. But of all the mourners sighing between earth and sky nature is the one that

never repents ; and the sun shines out over the saddest ruin as it shines out over the richest growth, as careless of the one as of the other.

Edgar came down from the Hill in the sunshine, handsome, strong

jocund as the day. As he rode through the famous double avenue of chestnuts he thought, what a glorious day!—how clear and full of life after the storm!—but he noted the wreckage too, and was concerned to see how the trees and fields had suffered. Still, the one would put forth new branches and fresh leaves next year; and if the other had been roughly handled there was yet a salvage to be garnered. The ruin was not irreparable, and he was in the mood to make the best of things. Do not the first days of a happy love ever give the happiest kind of philosophy for man and woman to go on?

And he was happy in his love. Who more so? He was on his way now to Ford House as a man going to his own, serene and confident of his possession. He had left his treasure overnight, and he went to take it up again, sure to find it where he had laid it down. He had no thought of the thief who might have stolen it in the dark hours, of the rust that might have cankered it in the chill of the grey morning. He only pictured to himself its beauty, its sweetness, and undimmed radiance; only remembered that this treasure was his, his own and his only, unshared by any, and known in its excellence by none before him.

He rode up to the door glad, dominant, assured. Life was very pleasant to the strong man and ardent lover—the English gentleman with his happiness in his own keeping, and his future marked out in a clear broad pathway before him. There was no cloud in his sky, no shadow on his sea; it was all sunshine and serenity; man the master of his own fate and the ruler of circumstance—man the supreme over all things, a woman's past included.

Not seeing Leam in the garden, Edgar rang the bell, and was shown into the drawing-room where she was sitting alone. The down-drawn blinds had darkened the room to a pleasant twilight for eyes somewhat overpowered by the blazing sunshine and the dazzling white clouds flung like heaps of snow against the hard bright blue of the sky; yet something struck more chill than restful on the lover as he came through the doorway, little fanciful or sentimental as he was.

Leam, who had not been in bed through the night, was sitting on the sofa, in the remotest and darkest part of the room. She rose as he entered; rose only; not coming forward to meet him, but standing in her place silent, pale, yet calm and collected. She did not look at him, but neither did she blush nor tremble. There was something statuesque, almost dead about her; something that was not the same Leam whom he had known from the first.

He went up to her, both hands held out. She shrank back and folded hers in each other, still not looking at him.

"Why, Leam, what is it!" he cried in amazement, pained, shocked at her action. Was she in her right mind? Had she heard of his former attentions to Adelaide, divined their ultimate meaning, and been seized with a mad idea of sacrifice and generosity? It must be with Adelaide, he thought, rapidly reviewing his past. He was absolutely

safe about Violet Cray, who had never known his name; and those later Indian affairs were dead and as good as buried. What then did it mean?

"No; not till you have heard me," said Leam in a low voice. "And never after."

"My darling! what is it?" he repeated.

"You must not call me dear names. I am unworthy," said Leam. "No!" checking him as he would have spoken, smiling with a sense of relief that her craze—if it was a craze—went to the visionary side of her own unworthiness and was not due to any knowledge of his misdeemeanors—as she might think them. "Don't speak. I have to tell you. I had forgotten it," she went on to say, in the same tense, compressed manner—the manner of one who has a task to get through, and has gathered all her strength for the effort, leaving none to be squandered in emotion—"I was so happy in these last days I had forgotten it. Now I have remembered; and we must part."

Edgar was grieved to see her in such deadly trouble; for it was easy to see her pain beneath her still exterior, but he was confident, and if grieved not afraid. Leam's little life, so innocent and uneventful as it must have been, could hold no such tremendous evil, could have been smirched with no such damning stain as that at which she seemed to hint. Grant even that there had been something more between her and Alick Corfield than he would quite like to hear—which was his first thought—still that more must needs be very little, could but be very simple! His wife must be spotless; that he knew; and he would marry none whose past was not as unsullied as new-fallen snow—as unsullied as must be her future. Absolute purity—the unruffled emotions of a maidenhood undisturbed until now even by dreams, even by visions—he owed it to himself and his position that his wife, man of many loves as he was, should be this; but at the worst the childish affection of brother and sister, which was all that could possibly have been between Leam and that awkward young gangrel Alick Corfield, could have nothing in it that he ought to take to heart, or that should influence him. Yes, he might smile and not be afraid. And indeed her delicate conscience was another grace in his eyes. He loved her more than ever for the honesty that must confess all its little sins. Sweet Leam! Leam having to confess! Leam! she who was almost too modest for an ordinary lover's comfort, needing to be tamed out of her savage bashfulness, not to be reprov'd for transgressing the proper reticence of an English maid. It was a pretty play; but it was only a play.

"Come and sit by me, and make full confession, my darling," he said lovingly.

"I will stand where I am. You sit," said Leam, without looking at him.

He seated himself on the sofa.

"And now what has my little culprit to say for herself?" he asked pleasantly, putting on a playful magisterial air.

"It is over," said Leam, her hands pressed in each other with so tight a clasp that the strained knuckles were white and started. "You must not love me. I cannot be your wife."

"Why?" He showed his square white teeth beneath the golden sweep of his moustache, his moist red lips parted, always smiling.

"I have done a great crime," said Leam in a low, monotonous voice.

"A crime! That is a large word for a small peccadillo—larger than any sin of yours merits, my sweet Heart."

"You do not know," said Leam with a despairing gesture. "How can you know when you have not heard?"

"Well, what may be its name?" he asked, willing to humour her.

She paused for a moment; then, with a visible effort, drawing in her breath she said, in a voice that was unnaturally calm and low: "I killed Madame."

"Leam!" cried Edgar; "how can you talk such nonsense! The thing is growing beyond a joke. Unsay your words; they are a wrong done to *me*."

He had started to his feet while he spoke and now stood before her with a strangely scared and startled face. Naturally, as such a man would, he was resolute not to accept such a terrible confession, and one so unlikely, so impossible; but something in the girl's voice and manner, something in its sad still reality seemed to overpower his determination to find this simply a bad joke which she was playing off on his credulity. And then the thing fitted only too well. He had heard half-a-dozen times of Madame de Montfort's sudden death, and how strange it was that the draught which she had taken so often with impunity before should have been so found laden with prussic acid on the first night of her home-coming as to kill her in an instant; how strange too, that not the strictest search or inquiry could come upon a trace of such poison bought or possessed by any member of the family; for what police officer would look to find a sixty-minim bottle of prussic acid concealed among the coils of a young girl's hair? And when Leam said in that quiet if desperate manner that it was she who had killed Madame, her words made the whole mystery clear and solved the as yet unsolved problem.

Nevertheless he would not believe her, but said again, passionately: "Unsay your words, Leam; they offend me!"

"I cannot," said Leam trembling.

He laughed scornfully.

"Kill Madame de Montfort! Absurd! You could not. It was impossible for a girl like you to kill any one!" he cried in broken sentences. "How could you do such a thing, Leam, and not be found out? Silly child, you are raving."

"I put poison into the bottle; and she died," said Leam in a half-whisper.

"Leam! you a murderess!"

She quivered at the word, at the tone of loathing, of abhorrence,

of almost terror in which he said it; but she held her terrible ground. She had begun her martyrdom, her agony of atonement for the sake of truth and love; and she must go through now to the end.

"Yes," she said, "I am a murderess. Now you know all; and why you must not love me."

"I cannot believe you," he pleaded helplessly. "It is too horrible! My darling! say that you have told me this to try me; that it is not true, and that you are still my own, my very own, my pure and sinless Leam!"

He knelt at her feet, clasping her waist. He was not of those who, like Alick, could bear the sin of the beloved, as the sacrifice of pride, of self, of soul to that love. He himself might be stained from head to heel with the soil of sin, but his wife must be, as has been said, without flaw or blemish, immaculate and free from fault. Any lapse, involving the loss of repute, should it ever be made public, would have been the death-knell of his hopes, the requiem of his love; but such an infamy as this—if true it was only too final!

"Oh, no! no! do not do that!" cried Leam, trying to unclasp his hands. "Do not kneel to me! I ought to kneel to you!" she added with a little cry that struck with more than pity to Edgar's heart, and that nearly broke her down for so much relaxing of the strain, so much yielding to her grief, as it included.

"Leam! tell me you are joking; tell me that you did not do this awful thing!" he cried again; his handsome face, blanched and drawn, upturned to her in agony.

She put her hands over her eyes.

"I cannot lie to you," she said. "And I must not degrade you. Do not touch me. I am not good enough to be touched by you!"

He loosened his arms, and she shrank from him almost as if she faded away.

"Why did you deceive me?" he groaned. "You should not have let me love you, knowing the truth!"

"I did not know that you loved me, or that I loved you, till that night," she pleaded piteously. "If I had known I would have prevented it. I have told you as soon as I remembered."

"You have broken my heart!" he cried, flinging himself on the sofa, his face buried in the cushions. And then, strong man as he was, a brave soldier and an English country gentleman, he burst into a passion of tears that shook him as the storm had shaken the earth last night—tears that were the culmination of his agony, not its relief.

Leam stood by him as pale as the shattered lilies in the garden. What could she do? How could she comfort him? Tainted and dishonoured, she dared not even lay her hand on his—her infamous and murderous hand, and he so pure and noble! Neither could she pray for him; not yet for herself. Pray? to whom? To God? God had turned His face away from her, even as her lover had now turned away his. He

was angry with her, and still unappeased. She dared not pray to Him; and He would not hear her if she did. The saints were no longer the familiar and parental deities, grave and helpful, to whom she could refer all her sorrows and perplexities as in earlier times, sure of speedy succour. The teaching of the later days had destroyed the simple feticism of her childhood; and now, afraid of God by whom she was unforgiven, the saints swept out of her spiritual life like those mist-wreaths of morning which were once taken for solid towers and impregnable fortresses; the Holy Mother vanished with the rest; all spiritual help a myth, all spiritual consolation gone—how could she pray? Lonely as her life had been since mamma died, it had never been so lonely as now, when she felt that God had abandoned her and that she had sacrificed her lover to her sense of truth and honour—and what was due to his nobility.

She stood by him and watched his passionate outburst with anguish infinitely more intense than his own. To have caused him this sorrow was worse than to have endured it for herself. There was no sacrifice of self that she could not have made for his good. Spaniard as she was, she would have been above jealousy if another woman would have made him happier than she; and if her death would have given him gain or joy she would have died for him as another would have lived. Yet it was she, and she only, who was causing him this pain, who was destroying his happiness and breaking his heart.

She dared not speak nor move. It took all the strength she drew from silence to keep her from breaking into a more terrible storm of grief than even that into which he had fallen. She dared not make a sign; but simply stood there, doing her best to bear her heavy burden to the end. The only feeling that she had for herself was that it was cruel not to let her die; and why did not mute anguish kill her?

For the rest she knew that she had done the thing that was right, however hard. It was not fitting that she should be his wife, and it was better that he should suffer for the moment than be degraded for all time by the association with one so shameful, so dishonoured as herself.

Presently Edgar cleared his eyes and lifted up his face. He was angry with himself for this unmanly burst of feeling, and because angry with himself disposed for the moment to be hard on her. She was standing there in exactly the same spot and just the same attitude as before; her head a little bent, her hands twined in each other, her eyes, with the pleading, frightened look of confession turned timidly to him; but as he raised himself from the sofa, pushing back his hair and striding to the window as if to hide the fact of his having shed tears, she turned her eyes to the floor. She was beginning to feel now that she must not even look at him. The gulf that separated them, dug by her own inefaceable crime, was so deep, the distance so wide!

A painful silence fell between them; then Edgar, not looking at her, said in a constrained voice: "I will keep your dreadful secret, Leam, sacredly for ever. You feel sure of that, I hope. But as you say, we must part.

I do not pretend to be better than other men; but I could not take as my wife one who had been guilty of such an awful crime as this."

"No," said Leam, her parched lips scarcely able to form the word at all.

"Your secret will be safe with me," he repeated.

She did not reply. In giving up himself she had given up all that made life lovely, and the refuse might as well go as not.

"But we must part."

"Yes," said Leam.

He turned back to the window desperately troubled. He did really love her, passionately, sincerely. He longed at this very moment to take her in his arms, and tell her that he would accept her crime if only he might have herself. Had he not been the master of the Hill and a Harrowby he would have done so; but the master of the Hill and the head of the house of Harrowby had a character to maintain and a social ideal to keep pure. He could not bring into such a home as his, present to his mother as her daughter, to his sisters as their sister, a girl who, by her own confession, was a murderess—a girl who, if the law had its due, would be hanged by the neck in the precincts of the county jail till she was dead! He might have been sinful enough in his own life, in the ordinary way of men; and truly there were passages in his past that would scarcely bear the light; but what were the worst of his misdemeanors compared with this awful crime? No; he must resolutely crush the last lingering impulse of tenderness, and leave her to work through her own tribulation as he must work through his.

"But we must part," he said for the third time.

Her lips quivered. She did not answer; only bent her head in sign of acquiescence.

"It is hard to say it, harder still to do; and I who loved you so dearly!" cried Edgar, with the angry despair of a man forced against himself to give up his desire.

She put up her hands.

"Don't!" she said with a sharp cry. "I cannot bear to hear about your love!"

He gave a sudden sob. Her love for him was very precious to him; his for her very strong.

"Why did you tell me?" he then said. "And yet you did the right thing to tell me. I was wrong to say that; it was good of you Leam—noble, like yourself."

"I love you. That is not being noble," she answered slowly and with infinite pathos. "I could not have deceived you after I remembered."

"You are too noble to deceive," he said, holding out his hand.

Leam turned away.

"I am not fit to touch your hand," she said, the very pride of contrition in her voice; pride for him, if humiliation for herself.

"For this once!" he pleaded.

"I am unworthy," she answered.

At this moment little Fina came jumping into the room. She had in her hand a rose-coloured scarf that had once been poor Madame's, and which the nurse, turning out an old box of hers, had found and given to the child.

After she had kissed Edgar, played with his *breloques*, looked at the works of his watch, plaited his beard into three strings, and done all that she generally did in the way of welcome, she shook out the gauze scarf over her dress.

"This was mamma's—my own mamma's," she said. "Leam will never tell me about mamma—you tell me, Major Harrowby!" coaxingly.

"I cannot. I did not know her," said Edgar in an altered voice, while Leam looked as if her judgment had come; but bore it as she had borne all the rest, resolutely.

"I want to hear of my mamma, and who killed her," pouted Fina.

"Hush, Fina," said Leam in an agony. "You must not talk."

"You always say that, Leam, when I want to hear about mamma," was the child's petulant reply.

"Go away now, dear little Fina," said Edgar, who felt all that Leam must feel at these inopportune words, and who moreover, weak as he was in this direction, was longing for one last caress.

"I will go, and send her nurse," said Leam half-staggering to the door.

Had anything been wanting to show her the impossibility of their marriage this incident of Fina's random but incisive words would have been enough.

"Leam! not one word more?" he asked as he stood against the door, holding the handle in his hand.

"No," she said hopelessly. "What words can we have together?"

"And we are parting like this, and for ever?"

"For ever. Yes; it has to be for ever," she answered almost mechanically.

"Leam, why did you love me?" he cried, taking her hands in his and keeping them.

"How could I help it? Who would not love you?" she answered.

Again he gave a sudden heavy sob; and again the poor pale, tortured face reflected the pain it witnessed.

"Good-by," she then said, drawing her hands from his. "Remember only, when you blame me, that I told you not to let you be degraded. And forgive me before I die; for I loved you—ah! better than my own life!"

With a sudden impulse she stooped forward, took back his right hand in both of hers, pressed it to her bosom, kissed it passionately again and again, then turned, with one faint, half-suppressed moan, and left him. And as he heard her light feet cross the hall, wearily, heavily as the feet of a mourner dragging by the grave of the beloved, he knew that his dream

of love was over. But, with the strange satire of the senses in moments of sorrow, noting ever the most trivial things, Edgar noted specially the powerful perfume of a spray of lemon-plant which she bruised as she pressed his hand against her breast.

That evening Edgar Harrowby went down to the Rectory. He was strong enough in physique and in some phases of will, but he was not strong all through; and he had never been able to face, unassisted, the first desolation of a love disappointment.

Adelaide, in a picturesque dress and her most becoming mood, welcomed him with careful cordiality as a prodigal whose husks, clinging about his coat, were to be handled tenderly as if they were pearls. She saw that something was gravely wrong, and she grasped the line of connection if she did not understand the issue; but, mindful of the doctrine of letting well alone—also of that of catching a heart at the rebound—she made no allusion in the beginning, but let her curiosity gnaw her like the Spartan boy's fox without making a sign. At last, however, her curiosity became impatience and her impatience conquered her reserve. She was clever in her generation and fairly self-controlled; but she was only a woman after all.

"And when did you last see that eccentric little lady, Miss Leam?" she asked with a smile—not a bitter smile, merely one of careless amusement, as if Leam was acknowledged to be a comical subject of conversation and one naturally provoking a smile.

"Dear Adelaide," said Edgar, not looking at her but speaking with unusual earnestness, "do not speak ill of Leam Dundas, neither to me nor any one else. I ask it as a favour."

Adelaide turned pale.

"Tell me only one thing, Edgar—are you going to marry her?" she asked, her manner as earnest as his own, but with a different meaning.

"No! Marry her? Good God, no!" was his vehement reply. Then more tenderly: "But for all that do not speak ill of her—will you promise, dear, good friend?"

"Yes, I will promise," she answered with what was for her fervour and a sudden look of intense relief. "I never will again, Edgar; and I am sorry if I have hurt you at any time by what I may have said. I did not mean to do so."

"No, I know you did not. I can appreciate your motives; and they were good," Edgar answered with emotion; and then their two pairs of fine blue eyes met, and both were moist.

This was just at the moment when Leam, pale, rigid as a statue, thickly veiled, and holding a box in her hand, met Mr. Gryce in Steel's Wood, he having gone to catch such rare specimen of sleeping lepidoptera as the place afforded and his eyes could discern.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BLOTTED OUT.

GONE;—no one knew where. Gone in the night like a falling star, like a passing cloud; gone and left no trace; vanished like the sunshine of yesterday or the flowers of last spring! No one knew what had become of her and no one knew where to look for her; for the sole information gathered by the scared neighbours was, that Leam Dundas was missing and no one had seen her go.

She was thought by some to have simply run away after the manner of undisciplined youth aiming at mock heroism; but where? or with whom?—for, said the keen-eyed women and large-mouthed men, incredulous of maiden meditation fancy free, a pretty young thing of nineteen would never have left her comfortable home, her father, friends, and good name without some lover stirring in the matter. And this lover was just the missing link not to be found anywhere. Others said she had drowned herself; but here again, why? Young girls do not give up their precious freight of hope in love and present joy in youth for a trifling ailment or a temporary annoyance. And nothing worse than either could have befallen Leam, said the reasoners, putting their little twos and twos together and totting up the items with the serene accuracy of spiritual arithmeticians dealing with human emotion as if it was a sum in long division which any schoolboy could calculate.

Edgar Harrowby however, who came forward manfully enough to say when and where—if not how—he had last seen Miss Dundas, leant to the side of the believers in suicide; and on his own responsibility ordered the Broad to be dragged. Which looked ugly, said a few of the rasher spirits in the village, cherishing suspicion of their betters as the birth-right which had never had a chance of being bartered for a mess of pottage; while the more contemptuous, critical after the event, gave it as their opinion that the Major had a bee in his bonnet somewhere, for what gentleman in his seven sane senses would have looked for such a mare's-nest as Miss Leam Dundas lying among the bulrushes of the Broad? Drowned herself?—no! it was no drowning of herself that had come to little miss, be sure of that!

What however had come to her no one knew; the fact only was certain; she had gone, and no one had met her coming or seen her going, and for all trace left she might as well have melted into air like one of the fairy women of romance. To be sure the servants had heard her in her room in the early evening, and she had refused the tea which they had brought her, and told them, through the closed door, that she wanted nothing more that night. So they left her to herself; supposing her to be in one of her queer moods, to which they were used to give but scant heed, and not thinking more about her. The next morning she was missing; but when she had gone was as dark as where.

The discovery, later in the day, that certain effects—such as her mother's dressing-case and a few personal necessities of daily use—were gone too, seemed to dispose effectually of the theory of suicide; though what remained, a lover, companion of her flight, being wanting? It was a strange thing altogether, and the country was alive with wild theories and wild reports. But in a few days a letter from Mr. Dundas to the rector, and another to Edgar, set the question of self-destruction at rest, if also they gave loose to other energies of conjecture; for in both he said: "No harm has come to her, and I am content to let her remain where she has elected to place herself."

As it was just this *where* which tormented the folk with the sense of mystery and made them eager for news, the father's meagre explanation—which, in point of fact, was no explanation at all—was not found very satisfactory, and a few hard words were said of Mr. Dundas—his reserve to the world being taken for the same thing as indifference to his daughter, and resented as an offence. But, for the third time in his life, Sebastian was found capable of maintaining this impenetrable reserve. Pepita's true status in her own country—Madame's suspicious debts and those damaging letters from London—Leam's hiding-place—he had had strength enough to keep his own counsel about the first two unbroken, and now he betrayed no more about this last. It may as well be said that for this he had sufficient reason. Leam, who had confessed her crime, and announced her intention of flight and of hiding herself where no one should find her again, had not told him more than these bare bones of the story. And he did not care to know more. The skeleton was horrible enough as it stood; he was by no means inclined to clothe it with the flesh of detail, still less to follow his erring child to her place of exile. He was content that she should be blotted out. It was the sole reparation that she could make.

This sudden disappearance ended the foreign tour which had been Josephine's sweetest anticipations of the honeymoon; for Mr. Dundas turned back for home at once, intending to put up Ford House for sale and leave the place for ever. He was ashamed to live at North Aston, he said, after Leam's extraordinary conduct, her shameful, shameless *esclandre*, which, said Josephine to her own people, weeping, she supposed was due to her, the poor little thing not liking her for a stepmother.

"Though indeed she need not have been afraid," said the good creature effusively; "for I had intended to be kindness itself to the poor dear girl."

And when she said this, Mrs. Harrowby, who never failed an opportunity for moral cautery, remarked drily: "In all probability it is as well as it is, Josephine. You would have been very uncomfortable with her, and would have been sure to have spoiled her. And as Adelaide Birkett always says, very sensibly, she is odd enough already. She need not be made more so."

Maria threw out a doubt as to whether Mr. Dundas had heard from Leam at all. It was not like Sebastian to be so close, she said; but

Josephine assured her that he had, and a little bridled at the vapoury insinuation that Sebastian was not perfect. She detailed the whole circumstance with all the facts fully fringed and feathered. He had received the letter just as they were preparing to go to the Louvre; but he had not shown it to her, and she had not asked to see it. She saw though that he was much agitated when he read it; but he had put it in his pocket, and when she looked for it it was not there. All that he had said was, "Leam has left home, Josephine, and we must go back at once." Of course she had not asked questions, she said with a pleasant little assumption of wifely submission. Her search in her husband's pockets was only what might have been expected from the average woman; but the wifely submission was special.

For this curtailment of their sister's enjoyment Maria and Fanny judged Leam almost more severely than for any other delinquency involved in her flight. They spoke as if she had planned it purposely to vex her father and his bride in their honeymoon, and deprive them of their lawful pleasure; but Josephine never blamed her as they did, and when they were most bitter cast in her little words of soothing, and excused her with more zeal than evidence—excused her sometimes to the point of making her sisters angry with her and inclined to accuse her of her old failing—meek-spiritedness carried to the verge of self-abasement.

But the one who suffered most of all those left to lament or to wonder was poor Alick Corfield. It was a misery to see him, with his hollow cheeks and haggard eyes, like an animal that has been hunted into lone places, terrified and looking for a way of escape, or like a dog that has lost its master. He tried every method known to him to gain information of her directly or indirectly; but Mr. Dundas, ignorant himself, had only to guard that ignorance from breaking out. As for knowledge, he could not give what he did not possess; and the terrible thing that he did know he was not likely to let appear.

One day when the poor fellow broke down, as was not unusual with him when asking about Leam, and Mr. Dundas read him like a book—all save that one black page where the beloved name stood inscribed in letters of his own heart's blood between the words "crime" and "murder"—with a woman's liking for saying pleasant things which soothed those who heard them and did no hurt to those who said them—save for the insignificant manner in which falsehood hurts the soul—Sebastian, laying his hand kindly on the poor fellow's angular shoulder, said: "I am sorry to know as much as I do, Alick. There is no one to whom I would have given her so readily as to you, my dear boy. Indeed, it was always one of my hopes for the future, poor misguided child, and I can see that it was yours too. Ah! how I grieve that it is impossible!"

"Why impossible?" asked Alick who had the faculty of faith, his pale face flushing.

Mr. Dundas turned white. A look not so much of pain as of abhorrence came into his face,

"Impossible!" he said vehemently. "I would not curse my greatest enemy with my daughter's hand!"

Alick felt his blood run cold. What did he mean? Did he know all, or was he speaking only with the angry feeling of a man who had been disappointed and annoyed? There was a short pause. Then said Alick, looking straight into Sebastian's eyes and speaking very slowly, but with not too much emphasis:

"I would hold myself blessed with her as my wife, had she even committed murder."

Mr. Dundas started perceptibly.

"Oh," he answered after a moment's hesitation, with a forced and sickly kind of smile; "a silly girl's wrong-headedness does not reach quite so far as this! She has done wrong—miserably wrong—but between withdrawing herself from her father's house and committing such a crime as murder there is rather a wide difference. All the same I am disgraced by her folly," angrily, "and I will not let any one—not even you, Alick—know where she is."

"That is cruel to those who love her," pleaded Alick, his eyes filling with tears.

"If cruel it is necessary," said Mr. Dundas.

"But she must need friends about her now more than she ever did," urged Alick. "Tell me at least where to find her, that I may do what I can to console her."

Mr. Dundas shook his head.

"No," he said sternly. "She is dead to me, and shall be dead to my friends. She is blotted out from my love and I will blot her out from my memory; and no one's persuasions can bring back what is effaced! Now, my dear boy, let us understand one another. I have surprised your secret—you love my daughter; and had she been worthy of you I would have given her to you more willingly than to any one I know. But she herself has fixed the gulf between us, which I will not pass nor help any one else to pass. Learn to look on her as dead—for she is dead to me, to you, to the world!"

"Never to me!" cried Alick. "While she lives she must be always to me what she has been from the first day I saw her. Whatever she has done I shall always love her as much as I do now."

"You are faithful," replied Sebastian; "but trust me, boy, no woman that ever lived was worth so much fidelity. I will protect you against your own wish, and be your friend in spite of yourself. You shall not know where she is, and you shall not throw yourself away on her. As she has elected to be effaced she shall be effaced—blotted out for ever!"

"Then I will consecrate my life to finding her!" cried Alick warmly.

Mr. Dundas shrugged his shoulders.

"Who can persuade a wilful man against his folly?" he said coldly. "You are following a marsh-light, my boy, and if you do find it you will only be landed in a bog."

"If I find her I shall have found my reward," Alick answered with boyish fervour. "It will be happiness enough for me if I can bring back one smile to her face, or lighten one hour of its sorrow."

"Let well alone," said Mr. Dundas; but Alick answered, "Not till it is well; and God will help me!"

Whereupon the interview ended, and Alick left the house, feeling something as one of the knights of old might have felt when he had vowed himself to the Quest of the Holy Grail.

When Mr. Dundas came home naturally the Families called, as in duty bound and by inclination led. Excitement concerning Ford House was at its height, for there were two things to keep it alive—the one to see how the bride and bridegroom looked, the other to try and pick up something definite about Leam. And among the rest came Mr. Gryce, with his floating white locks falling about his bland cherubic face, his mild blue eyes with their trick of turning red on small provocation, and his lisping manner of speech, ingenuous, interrogatory and knowing nothing when interrogated in his turn, somehow gleaning full ears wherever he passed and dropping not even a solitary stalk of straw in return. He expressed his sorrow that he had not seen lately his young friend Miss Dundas.

"In my secluded life," he said, his eyelids reddening, "she is like a beautiful bird that flashes through the dull sky for a moment but leaves the atmosphere brighter than before." He glanced round the room as if looking for her. "I hope she is well?" he added, not attempting to conceal a certain accent of disappointment at her absence.

"Quite well when I heard from her," answered Mr. Dundas, doing his best to speak without embarrassment.

Mr. Gryce turned his face in frank astonishment on the speaker.

"Ah! She is from home, then?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Dundas curtly.

"I had not heard," lisped the tenant of Lionnet. "But I myself have been from home for a few days, and have just returned. Though indeed, present or absent, I know very little of my neighbours' doings, as you may see. I did not even know that Miss Dundas was from home."

"Yet it was pretty widely talked about," said Mr. Dundas, with a certain suspicious glance at the cherubic face smiling innocently into his.

"Doubtless the absence of Miss Dundas must have caused a gap," replied Mr. Gryce; "but you see, as I said, I have been away myself, and when I am at home I do not gossip."

"Have—— Where have you been?" asked Mr. Dundas abruptly, with that sudden glance as suddenly withdrawn which tells of a half-formed suspicion neither dwelt on nor clearly made out.

"To Paris," said Mr. Gryce demurely. "I went to see——"

"Oh! you went to see Notre Dame and la Madeleine, of course!" interrupted Sebastian satirically.

"No," answered Mr. Gryce with a cherubic smile. "Strange to say, I had business connected with that odd drama of *Le Sphinx*."

There was not much more talk after this, and Mr. Gryce soon took his leave, desiring to be most respectfully remembered to Miss Dundas when her father next wrote, and to say that he was keeping some pretty specimens of moths for her on her return; both of which messages Sebastian promised to convey at the earliest opportunity, improvising a counter-remark of Leam's which he was sorry he could not remember accurately, but it was something about butterflies and Mr. Gryce, though what it was he could not positively say.

"Never mind; I will take the will for the deed," said the naturalist as he smiled himself through the doorway.

And when he had gone Josephine declared that she did not care if he never came again—there was something she did not like about him. Pushed for a reason by her husband who always assumed a logical and masculine tone to her, she had not one to produce; but she stumbled as if by chance on the word "sinister," which was just what Mr. Gryce was not. So Sebastian made her go into the library for the dictionary, and hunt up the word through all its derivations; and thus proved to her incontestably that she was ignorant of the English language and of human nature in about equal proportions.

It was soon remarked at the post-office that no letter addressed to Miss Dundas ever left North Aston, and that none came to Mr. Dundas, or any one else, in the queer cramped handwriting which experience had taught Mrs. Pepper, postmistress as well as the keeper of the village general shop, carried the sentiments of Leam Dundas. This caused a curious little buzz in the lower parts of the hive when Mrs. Pepper mentioned it to her friends and gossips; but as no fire can live without fresh fuel, and as nothing whatever was heard of Leam to stimulate curiosity or set new tales afloat, by degrees her name dropped out of the daily discussions of the place, and she was no longer interesting, because she had become used up and talked out.

Only Mr. Gryce wrote more frequently than had been his wont to Miss Gryce, at Windy Brow, in Cumberland—conjectured to be his sister; and only Alick never ceased in his attempts to discover where his lost queen was hidden; though these attempts had hitherto been hopelessly baffled, partly because he had not an inch of foothold whence to make his first spring, nor the thinnest clue to tell him which path to take.

And as a purchaser, the final cause of whose existence seemed to have been the unquestioning possession of Ford House, came suddenly on the scene and took the whole thing as it stood, Sebastian and his wife left the place, taking Fina with them, and migrated to Paris to finish their interrupted honeymoon. So now it was supposed that the last link connecting Leam with North Aston was broken, and that she was indeed blotted out and for ever.

True love is faithful; and Alick Corfield's love was true. Had all

the world forsaken her he would have remained immovable in his old place and attitude of devotion ;—the one fixed idea always possessing him to find her in her retreat, and restore her to self-respect and happiness by his undying love. But how to find her? All sorts of mad projects passed through his brain, but mad projects need some methods, and methods in harmony with existing conditions, if they are to bring success ; and Alick's vague resolves to go out and look for her had no more meaning in them than the random moves of a bad chessplayer.

Had Sir Lancelot lived at the present time he would have gone to Camelot by express, like meaner souls ; and had Sir Galahad set out on his Quest in the latter half of the nineteenth century he would have either advertised in the newspapers or have employed a detective for the first part of his undertaking. So, had Alick gone to Scotland Yard and taken the police into his confidence, Leam would have been found in less than a week ; but as he shrank from bringing her into contact with the force mainly associated with crime, he was left to his own devices unassisted ; and these devices ended only in constantly recurring disappointment, and consequent increase of sorrow.

His sorrow indeed was so great, and told on him so heavily, that every one said he was going to die. He had been left thin and gaunt enough by his illness, but distress of mind coupled with weakness of body reduced him to a kind of sketchy likeness of Don Quixote—his pure soul and honest nature the only beautiful things about him—while his mother's heart is as nearly broken as his own.

CHAPTER XIX.

WINDY BROW.

WHILE North Aston was employing its time in wondering, and Alick Corfield was breaking his heart in sorrowing, Leam was doing battle with her despair and distress at Windy Brow ; doing the best she could to keep her senses clear and to live through the penance which she had inflicted on herself.

So far Mrs. Pepper's conclusions, based on a badly-gummed envelope, were right—Miss Gryce, of Windy Brow, was the sister of Mr. Gryce, of Lionnet ; though even Mrs. Pepper did not know that Leam Dundas, under the name of Leonora Darley, was living with her.

It is not the most obvious agents that are the most influential. The greatest things in nature are the work of the smallest creatures, and our lives are manipulated far more by unseen influences, known only to ourselves, than by those patent to the world. In all North Aston Mr. Gryce was the man who had apparently the least hold on the place and the slightest connection with the people. He had come there by accident, and by choice lived in retirement ; though also by choice he had not been there a month before he knew all there was to be known of every individual for miles round. The merest chances had made him

personally acquainted with Sebastian Dundas—those chances his tenancy of Lionnet and the slight attack of fever which called forth his landlord's sentiment and pity. Through the father he came to know the daughter; when the prying curiosity of his nature, his liking for secret influence and concealed action, together with the kind heart at bottom, and his real affection for the girl whose confidence he partly forced and partly won, threw the whole secret into his hands and made him master of the situation—the keeper of the seal set against the writings whom no one suspected of complicity. This was exactly the kind of thing he liked, and the kind of thing that suited him, human mole, born detective and conspirator as he was.

When Leam met him in the wood on the evening of her confession to Edgar she met him with the deliberate intention of confessing her fearful secret to him too, and of asking him to help her to escape, like the friend which he had promised he would be. She knew that it was impossible for her now to live at North Aston, and the sole desire she had was to be blotted out, as she had been.

There was no excitement about her, no feverish exaltation that would burn itself cold before twenty-four hours were over—only the dead dreariness of heartbreak, the tenacious resolution of despair. She neither wept nor wrung her hands; but quiet, pale, rigid, she told her terrible story in the low and level tones in which a Greek Fate might have spoken, as sad and as immutable. She had sinned and now had made such atonement as she could by confession to her lover to save him from pollution—to her father to cancel his obligations to her—to her friend to be helped in her lifelong penance. This done, she had strengthened herself to bear all that might come to her with that resignation of remorse which demands no rights and inherits no joys. She was not one of those emotional half-hearted creatures who resolve one day, break down the next, and drift always. For good and evil alike she had the power to hold where she had gripped, and to maintain what she had undertaken; and even her life at Windy Brow did not shake her.

And that life might well have shaken both a stronger mind and even a more resolute will than hers.

A square stone house of eight rooms, set on a bleak fell-side where the sun never shone, where no fruits ripened, no flowers bloomed, and no trees grew, save here and there a dwarfed and twisted thorn covered with pale grey lichen and bent by the wind into painful deformity of growth—a house which had no garden, only a strip of rank coarse grass before the windows, with a potato-patch and a kail-yard to the side; where was no adornment within or without, no beauty of colour, no softness of line, merely a rugged, lonesome, square stone tent set up on a mountain spur as it would seem for the express reception of tortured penitents not seeking to soften sorrow—this was Windy Brow, the patrimony of the Gryces, where Keziah, Emmanuel's eldest sister, lived and had lived these sixty years and more.

The house stood alone ; Monk Grange, the hamlet to which it geographically belonged, a place as bleak and bare as itself and which seemed to have been flung against the fell-foot as if a bricklayer's hod-man had pitched the hovels at haphazard anyhow, was two good miles away ; and the market-town, to be got at only by crossing a dangerous moor, was nine miles off ; as far as Sherrington from North Aston.

But the few poor dwellers in Monk Grange had little to do with the market-town. They lived mostly on what they managed to raise and rear among themselves—holding braxy mutton good enough for feast-days, and oatmeal porridge all the year round the finest food for men and bairns alike. As for the gudewives' household necessities, they were got by the carrier who passed once a fortnight on their road ; and for the rest, if aught was wanting more than that which they had, they did without, and, according to the local saying, want was already master.

Society of a cultured kind there was none. The clergyman was an old man little if at all superior to the flock to which he ministered. He was a St. Bees man, the son of a handloom weaver, speaking broad Cumberland and hopelessly "dished" by a hard word in the Bible. He was fond of his glass, and was to be found every day of his life from three to nine at the "Blucher," smoking a clay pipe and drinking rum-and-milk. He had never married, but he was by no means an ascetic in his morals, as more than one buxom wench in his parish had proved ; and in all respects he was an anachronism the like of which is rare now among the fells and dales, though at one time it was the normal type for the clergy of the remoter North-country districts.

This old sinner, Priest Wilson as he was called, and Miss Gryce of Windy Brow, represented the wealth and intellect of a place which was at the back of everything, out of the highway of life and untouched by the progress of history or science. And the one was not very much superior to the other save in moral cleanliness ; which however counts for something.

If North Aston had said with a sniff that Mr. Gryce was not thoroughbred, what would have been its verdict on Sister Keziah ? He at least had rubbed off some of the native fell-side mould by rolling about foreign parts, gathering experience if not moss, and becoming rich in knowledge if not in guineas ; but Keziah, who had spent the last twenty years of her life in close attendance on a paralytic old mother, had stiffened as she stood, and the local mould encrusting her was very thick. Nevertheless she too had a good heart if a rough hand ; and though eccentric almost to insanity, as one so often finds with people living out of the line and influence of public opinion, yet was as sound at the core as she was rude and odd in the husk.

She was a small woman, lean, wrinkled, and with a curious mixture of primness and slovenliness in her dress. She wore a false front, which she called a topknot, the small, crimped, deep-brown mohair curls of which were bound about her forehead with a bit of black velvet ribbon, while

grey hairs straggled from underneath to make the patent sham more transparent still; and over her topknot she wore a rusty black cap that enclosed the keen monkeyish face like a ruff. Her everyday gown was one of coarse brown camlet, any number of years old, darned and patched till it was like a Joseph's coat; and the Rob Roy tartan shawl which she pinned across her bosom hid a state of dilapidation which even she did not care should be seen. She wore a black stuff apron full of fine tones from fruit-stains and fire-scorchings; and she took snuff.

She was reputed to be worth a mort of money, and she had saved a goodly sum. It would have been more had she had the courage to invest it; but she had a profound distrust of all financial speculations—had not Emmanuel lost his share by playing at knucklebones with it in the City? and she was not the fool to follow my leader into the mire! For her part she put her trust in teapots and stockings, with richer hoards wrapped in rags and sewn up in the mattress, and here a few odd pounds under the rice, and there a few hidden in the coffee. That was her idea of a banking account, and she held it to be the best there was.

"Don't lend your hat," she used to say, "and then you'll not have to go bareheaded." And sometimes, talking of loans on securities, she would take a pinch of snuff and say she "reckoned nowt of that man who locked his own granary door and gave another man the key."

To all appearance she lived only to scrape and hoard, moidering away her loveless life on the futile energies and sordid aims of a miser's wretched pleasures. But every now and then she had risen up out of the slough into which she had gradually sunk, and had done some grand things that marked her name with so many white stones. While she gloried in her skill in filching from the pig what would serve the chickens, in making Jenny go short to save to-day's baking of havre bread, in skimping Tim's bowl of porridge—his appetite being a burden on her estate which she often declared would break her—she had more than once given a hundred pounds at a blow to build a raft for a poor drowning wretch who must otherwise have sunk. In fact, she was one of those people who are small with the small things of life and great with the great; who will grudge a daily dole of a few threshed-out stalks of straw, but sometimes, when rightly touched, will shower down with both hands full sheaves of golden grain. That is, she had mean aims, a bad temper, no imagination, but the capacity for pity and generosity on occasions.

Above all things she hated to be put out of the way or intruded on. When her brother Emmanuel came down on her without a word of warning, bringing a girl with eyes that, as she said, made her feel foolish to look at, and a manner part scared, part stony, and wholly unconformable, telling her to keep this precious bit madam like a bale of goods till called for, and to do the best with it she could, she was justified, she said, in splurging against his thoughtlessness and want of consideration; taking a body like that all of a heap, without with your leave or by your leave, or giving one a chance of yes, I will, or no, I won't.

But though she splurged she gave way; and after she had fumed and fussed, heckled the maid and harried the man, said she didn't see as how she could and she didn't think as how she would, sworn there was no bedding fit to use, and that she had no place for the things—apples and onions chiefly—that were in the spare room, if she gave it up for the young lass's use, she seemed to quiet down; and going over to Leam, standing mutely by the black-boarded fireplace, put on her spectacles, peered up into her face, and said in shrill tones, rasping as a saw, though she meant to be kind:—

"Ah well! I suppose it must be; so go your ways upstairs with Jenny, bairn, and make yourself at home. It's little I have for a fine young miss like you to play with, but what I have you're welcome to, so make no bones about it, d'ye hear?"

"But I am in your way," said Leam, not moving. "You do not want me?"

Miss Gryce laughed. "Want ye?" she shouted. "Want ye, do you say? Nay, nay, honey, it was no wanting of you or your marras that would ever have given me a headache, I'll ensure ye! But now that you are here you can bide as long as you've a mind; and you're welcome kindly. And Emmanuel there knows that my word is as good as my bond, and what I say I mean."

"Am I to stay?" asked Leam, turning to Mr. Gryce with a certain forced humility which showed how much it cost her to submit.

"Yes," he answered, less cheerfully and more authoritatively than was his manner at North Aston, speaking without a lisp and with a full Cumberland accent. "It is the best thing I can do for you—all I have to offer."

To which Leam bent her sad head with pathetic patience—pathetic indeed to those who knew the proud spirit that it reported broken and humbled for ever. Following the red-armed, touzled, ragged maid to the dingy cabin that was to be her room, she left her friend to explain to his sister, so far as he chose and could, the necessity under which he found himself of leaving his adopted daughter Leonora Darley in her care for a week or two, until such time as he should return and claim her.

"Your adopted daughter? God bless my soul, man, but you are the daftest donnet I ever saw on two legs!" cried Keziah, snatching up the coarse grey knitting which was the sole unanchored circumstance in the room and casting off her heel viciously. "What call had you to adopt a daughter, you, with never a wife to mother her, nor a house of your own to take her to? For I reckon nowt of your furnished houses here and your beggarly apartments there, as you know. And now you can do nothing better than bring her here to fash the life out of me before the week's over! But that's always the way with you men. You talk precious big, but it's mighty little you put your hands to; and when you hack out yokes for which you get a deal of praise, you take care not to bear them on your own backs. It's us women who have to do that."

"I should have thought you would have liked a pretty young thing like that in the house. You are lonesome enough here; and it makes a little life," said Emmanuel quietly.

He knew his sister Keziah, and that she must have her head when the talking fit was on her.

"A pretty young thing like that!" she repeated scornfully. "Lord love you, born cuddy as you are! What's her good looks to me, I wonder, but a pound spent on a looking-glass, and Jenny taken off her work to make cakes and butter-sops for her dainty teeth? We'll have all the men folk too, hawering round to see which of 'em may have the honour of ruining himself for my fine lady! And I'll not have it, I tell ye. I'll not have my house turned into a fair, with madam there as the show. Life! what do I want with 'life' about me, or you either, Emmanuel? I've got my right foot in the grave, and I reckon yours is not far off; and what we've both got to do now is to see that we make a good ending for our souls."

"At all events you don't refuse to take her for a week or two?" asked Emmanuel innocently.

"Did I say I refused? Did I send her upstairs as the nighest road to the street-door?" retorted Keziah with disdain. "Did I not tell you, as plain as tongue could speak, that she is welcome to her bit and sup, and I'll pass the time away for her in the best way I can, though bad is the best I reckon?"

"Well, well, you are a good body," said her brother.

"Aye," she answered, "I am good enough when I jump your way. But tell me, Emmanuel," changing from the disdain of the superior creature holding forth on high matters to the inferior to the familiar gossip of the natural woman, "what's to do with her? It's as plain as a pikestaff that something is troubling her, and maybe it will be some of your love nonsense; for it's mainly that as fashes the lasses Good lord! I'm thankful I was never hindered that way!"

"Yes," said Mr. Gryce, "she has had what you women call a disappointment; and," speaking with unusual energy, "the man was a fool and a coward, and she has had a lucky escape."

"Say ye? If so then there is no call for her to carry on," said Keziah philosophically. "But the poor bairn's looking wantle enough now, though I warrant me the fell-side air will brisk her up in no time."

"I hope it will," said her brother.

"What does she eat, now? You see now I've got the lass on my hands I cannot hunger her," said Keziah. "Not that I can give her dainties and messes," she added hastily, the miser's cloak suddenly covering the woman's heart. "She'll have to take what we get, and be thankful for her meat. Still, it's as well to know what a body's been accustomed to when they come like this, all of a heap."

"Don't fash yourself about her," answered Emmanuel. "Do what you can—that you will, I know; but leave her to herself—that's the way

for her. She's an odd little body, and the least said the soonest mended with Leam."

"With who d'ye say?" asked Keziah sharply.

"Lean—Leonora," said Emmanuel cherubically.

"Well, I wouldn't call a daughter of mine after Pharaoh's kine!" snapped Keziah with supreme scorn; and at that moment Leam came into the room, and Keziah bustled out of it to tig after Jenny and ding at Tim, as these two faithful servitors were wont to express the way of their mistress towards them.

"My dear, I did not know that things were so miserable here for you, but you must just bide here till the scent grows cold, and then I'll come for you and put you where you'll be better off," said Mr. Gryce kindly when he was alone with Leam.

"This will do," said Leam, suppressing a shudder as she looked round the little room where what had originally been a rhubarb-coloured paper—chosen because it was a good wearing colour—was patched here and there with scraps of newspapers or bits of other patterned papers; where the huge family Bible and a few musty and torn odd volumes of the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* comprised the sole library; and where the only ornaments of the chimney-piece were three or four bits of lead-ore from the Roughton Gill mines, above Caldbeck.

"You have been used to something far different," said Emmanuel, compassionately.

"My past is over," she answered in a low voice.

"But you'll come to a better future!" he cried, his mild blue eyes watery and red.

"Shall I? When I die?" was her reply, as she passed her hand wearily over her forehead, and wished, ah, how ardently! that the question might answer itself now at once.

But the young live against their will, and Leam, though bruised and broken, had still the grand vitality of youth to support her. Of the stuff of which in a good cause martyrs, in a bad criminals, are made, she accepted her position at Windy Brow with the very heroism of resignation. She never complained, though every circumstance, every condition was simply torture; and so soon as she saw what she was expected to do she did it without remonstrance or reluctance. Her life there was like a lesson in a foreign language which she had undertaken to learn by heart, and she gave herself to her task loyally. But it was suffering beyond even what Emmanuel Gryce supposed, or Keziah ever dreamed of. She, with the sun of the South in her veins, her dreams of pomegranates and orange groves, of music and colour and bright blue skies, of women as beautiful as mamma, of that one man—not of the South but fit to have been the godlike son of Spain!—suddenly translated from soft and leafy North Aston to a bleak fell-side in the most desolate corner of Cumberland, where for lush hedges were cold, grim greystone walls, and the sole flowers to be seen gorse—which she could not gather,

and heather which had no perfume;—to a house set so far under the shadow that it saw the sun only for three months in the year, and where her sole companion was old Keziah Gryce, ill-favoured in person, rough of mood if true of soul, or creatures even worse than herself. She, with that tenacious loyalty, that pride and concentrated passion, that dry reserve and want of general benevolence characteristic of her, to be suddenly cast among uncouth strangers whose ways she must adopt, and who were physically loathsome to her; dead to the only man she loved, his love for her killed by her own hand, herself by her own confession accursed—and to bear it all in silent patience—was it not heroic? Had she been more plastic than she was the effort would not have been so great. Being what she was it was grand; and made as it was for penitence it had in it the essential spirit of saintliness. For saintliness comes in small things as well as great, and George Herbert's swept room is a true image. There was saintliness in the docility with which she rose at six and went to bed at nine; saintliness in the quiet asceticism with which she ate porridge for breakfast and porridge for supper—at the first honestly believing it either a joke or an insult, and that they had given her pigs' food to try her temper; saintliness in the silence with which she accepted her dinners, maybe a piece of fried bacon and potatoes, or a huge mess of apple-pudding on washing days, or a plate of poached eggs fried in a pan not over clean; saintliness in the enforced attention which she gave to Keziah's rambling stories of her pigs and her chickens, her mother's ailments, Jenny's shortcomings in the matter of sweepings and savings, Tim's wastefulness in the garden over the kailrunts, and the hardships of life on a lone woman left with only a hussy to look after her; saintliness in the repression of that proud fastidious self to which Keziah's familiarity and snuff, Jenny's familiarity and disorder, the smell of the peat, which was the only fuel they burnt, reeking through the house, and the utter ugliness and barren discomfort of everything about, were hourly miseries which she would once have repudiated with her most cutting scorn; saintliness in the repression of that self indeed at all four corners, and the resolute submission to her burden—because it was her fitting punishment.

So the sad days went on, and the fell-side air had not yet brisked up Emmanuel's adopted daughter as his sister prophesied. Indeed, she was slighter and paler than ever, and if possible more submissive to her lot and more taciturn. And as her intense quietude of bearing suited Miss Gryce, who could not bear to be fussed, and time proved her douce and not fashionable, she became quite a favourite with her rough-grained hostess, who wondered more and more where Emmanuel had picked her up, and whose bairn she really was.

Her only pleasure was in wandering over the fells, whence she could see the tops of the Derwentwater mountains, and from some points a glimpse of blue Bassenthwaite flowing out into the open; where mountain tarns, lying like silver plates in the purple distance, were her

magic shows, seen only in certain lights and more often lost than found; whence she could look over the broad Carlisle plain and dream of that day on the North Aston moor when she first met Edgar Harrowby; and whence the glittering strip of the Solway against the horizon made her yearn to be in one of the ships which she could dimly discern passing up and down, so that she might leave England for ever and lay down the burden of her life and her sorrow in mamma's dear land.

So the hours passed, dreary as Mariana's, and hopeless as those wherein we stand round the grave and know that the end of all things has come. And while North Aston wondered and Alick mourned, and Edgar repented of his past folly with his handsome head in Adelaide's lap, Leam Dundas moved slowly through the shadow to the light, and from her chastisement gathered that sweet grace of patience which redeemed her soul and raised her from sin to sanctity.

CHAPTER XX.

LOST AND NOW FOUND.

IN bringing up Alick tied tight to her apron-string, feeding him on moral pap, putting his mind into petticoats, and seeking to make him more of a woman than a man, Mrs. Corfield had defeated her designs and destroyed her own influence. During his early growth the boy had yielded to her without revolt, because he was more modest than self-assertive, had no solid point of resistance and no definite purpose for which to resist; but after his college career he developed on an independent line, and his soul escaped altogether from his mother's hold. Had she let him ripen into manhood in the freedom of natural development she would have been his chosen friend and confidante to the end; having invaded the most secret chambers of his mind, and sought to mould every thought according to the pattern which she held best, when the reaction set in the pendulum swung back in proportion to its first beat; and as a protest against his former thralldom he now made her a stranger to his inner life and shut her out inexorably from the holy place of his sorrow.

The mother felt her son's mind slipping from her; but what could she do? Who can set time backward or reanimate the dead? Day by day found him more silent and more suffering, the poor little woman nearly as miserable as himself. But the name of Leam, standing as the spectre between them, was never mentioned after Mrs. Corfield's first outburst of indignation at her flight—indignation not because she was really angry with Leam but because Alick was unhappy.

After Alick's stern rejoinder, "Mother, the next time you speak ill of Leam Dundas I will leave your house for ever," the subject dropped by mutual consent; but it was none the less a living barrier between them because raised and maintained in silence.

"Oh, these girls! these wicked girls!" Mrs. Corfield had said with a mother's irrational anger, when speaking of the circumstance to her

husband. "We bring up our boys only for them to take from us. As soon as they begin to be some kind of comfort and to repay the anxiety of their early days, then a wretched little hussy steps in and makes one's life in vain!"

"Just so, my dear," said Dr. Corfield quietly. "These were the identical words which my mother said to me when I told her I was going to marry you."

"Your mother never liked me, and I did like Leam," said Mrs. Corfield tartly.

"As Leam Dundas, maybe; but as Leam the wife of your son? I doubt it."

"If Alick had liked it——" said Mrs. Corfield, half in tears.

"You would have been jealous," returned her husband. "No! all girls are only daughters of Heth to the mothers of Jacobs; and I never knew one whom a mother thought good enough for her boy."

"You need not discredit your own flesh and blood for a stranger!" cried Mrs. Corfield crossly; and the mute man with an aggravating smile suddenly seemed to repent of his unusual loquacity, and gradually subsided into himself and his calculations, from which he was so rarely aroused.

Alick, ceasing to make a confidante of his mother, began to make a friend of Mr. Gryce. Perhaps it ought rather to be said that Mr. Gryce began to make a friend of him. The old philosopher, with that cork-screw mind of his, knew well enough what was amiss with the poor lank-visaged curate. Being of the order of the benevolent busybodies fond of playing Providence, how mole-like soever his method, he had marked out a little plan of his own by which he thought he could make all the crooked roads run straight and discord flow into harmony. But he too fell into the mistake common to busybodies, benevolent and otherwise;—treating souls as if they were machines to be wound up and kept going by the clockwork of an extraneous will, and neatly manipulated by well-arranged circumstance.

One day he joined Alick in his walk to an outlying cottage of the parish, where the husband was sick and the wife and children short of food; and the Church sent its prayer-book and ministers as the best substitute it knew for a wholesome dwelling and sufficient wages. Theology was not much in the way of an old heathen who reduced all religions, save Mahommedanism, to the transmuted presentation of the archaic solar myth, and who thought Buddhism far ahead of every other creed; but he liked the man, Alick, if the parson bored him, and he was caressing a plan which he had in his pocket.

"You find your life here satisfying, I suppose?" he began, his blue eyes looking into the wayside banks for creatures.

"Is any life?" answered Alick, his eyes turned to the vague distance.

"Not fully; the spirit of progress, working by discontent, forbids the social stagnation of rest and thankfulness; but we can come to something that suffices for our daily wants if it does not satisfy all our longings.

Work in harmony with our nature, and doing good here and there when we can, both these help us on. But the work must be harmonious and the good we do manifest."

"So far as that goes Church work is pleasant to me, all indeed I care for or am fit for; but North Aston is stony ground," said Alick.

"Can you wonder? When the husbandman-in-chief is such a man as Mr. Birkett you must make your account with stones and weeds. The spiritual cannot flourish under the hand of the unspiritual; and considering the pastor the flock is far from bad."

"That may be; but we do not like to live only in comparatives," said Alick. "I confess I should be happier in a cure where I was more of one mind with my rector than I am here, and not decried or ridiculed on account of every scheme for good that I might propose. Parish work here is shamefully neglected, but Mr. Birkett will not let me do anything to mend it."

"Ah!" said Mr. Gryce, catching a luckless cecidomyia by the way; "that is bad. A more harmonious one would certainly be, as you say, far more agreeable. Or a little parish of your own?—a parish, however small, which would be all your own, and you not under the control of any one below your diocesan? How would that do? That would be my affair if I were in the Church."

Alick's face lightened.

"Yes," he said, "that is my dream—at least one of them. I would not care how small the place might be if I had supreme control and might work unhindered in my own way."

"It will come," said Mr. Gryce cheerily. "All things come in time to him who knows how to wait."

"Ah, if I could believe that!" sighed Alick, thinking of Leam.

"Take my word for it," returned Mr. Gryce. "It will do you no harm to have a dash of rose-colour in your rather sombre life; and Hope, if it tells flattering tales, does not always tell untrue ones."

"I fear my hope has flattered me untruly," said Alick, his faithful heart still on Leam.

Mr. Gryce captured a caterpillar wandering across the road.

"Conduct is fate," he said. "If this poor fellow had not been troubled with a fit of restlessness, but had been content to lie safely hidden among the grass-roots where he was born, he would not have been caught. Yes, conduct is fate for a captive caterpillar as well as for man."

"And yet who can foresee?" said Alick. "We all walk in the dark blindfold."

"As you say, who can foresee? That makes perhaps the hardship of it, but it does not alter the fact. Blindly walking, or with our eyes wide open, our steps determine our destiny, and our goal is reached by our own endeavours. We ourselves are the artificers of our lives, and mould them according to our own pattern."

"But that part of our lives which is under the influence of another?

How can we manipulate that?" said Alick. "Love and loss are twin powers which create or crush without our co-operation."

"I only know one irreparable manner of loss, that by death," said Mr. Gryce steadfastly. "For all others, while there is life there is hope, and I hold nothing beyond the power of the will to remedy."

"I wish I could believe that," Alick sighed again; and again Mr. Gryce said, cheerily:

"Then take that too on trust, and believe me if you do not believe in your own inborn elasticity, your own power of doing and undoing."

"There are some things which can never come right when they have once gone wrong," said Alick.

"You think so? I know very few!" his companion answered, in the hearty, inspiring manner which he had used all through the interview, talking with a broader accent and lisping less than usual; looking altogether more manly and less cherubic than his wont. "I am a believer myself in the power of the will and holding on." After a pause he added suddenly: "You would be really glad of a small living, no matter where situated, nor how desolate and unimportant, where you would be sole master?"

"Yes," said Alick; "if I could win over one soul to the higher life I should count myself repaid for all my exertions. We must all have our small beginnings."

"I am an odd old fellow, as you know, Mr. Corfield," laughed Emmanuel Gryce. "Give me your hand; I can sometimes see a good deal of the future in the hand."

Alick blushed and looked awkward, but he gave his bony, ill-shaped hand all the same.

After a little while, during which Mr. Gryce had bent this finger this way and that finger another way, had counted the lines made by the bended wrist, and had talked half to himself of the line of Jupiter and the line of Saturn, the line of life and that of Venus, he said, quietly: "You will have your wish, and soon. I see a most important change of residence at about this time, which, in conjunction with this," pointing to a small cross at the root of the fourth finger, "will be certainly to your advantage."

"How strange!" said Alick. "One scarcely knows whether to laugh at it all as old wives' fables or to believe in the mysterious forewarnings of fate, the foremarkings of the future."

"There are more things in heaven and earth——" said Mr. Gryce. "And we know so little we may well believe a trifle more."

The fact was, all this was founded on these circumstances. He had at this moment a letter in his pocket from his sister Keziah telling him that old Priest Wilson had been found dead in his bed last night;—the Bishop's chaplain was a friend of his, both having been at the same station in India;—and the perpetual curacy of Monk Grange was one which, if offices went according to their ratio of unpleasantness, a man

should have been paid a large income to take. Hence there was no chance of a rush for the preferment, and the Bishop would be grateful for any intimation of a willing martyr. Through all of which chinks whereby to discover the future Mr. Gryce founded his prophecy, and through them too it came about that he proved a true prophet. In three days' time from this the post brought a letter to Alick Corfield from the Bishop offering him the perpetual curacy of Monk Grange, income seventy pounds a year, and a house.

Before speaking even to his mother Alick rushed off with this letter to Mr. Gryce. The old leaven of superstition which works more or less in all of us—even those few who think proof a desirable basis for belief, and who require an examination conducted on scientific principles before they accept supernaturalism as “only another law coming in to modify those already known”—that superstition which belongs to most men, and to Alick with the rest, made this letter a matter of tremendous excitement to him. He saw in it the hand of God and the finger of fate. It was impossible that Mr. Gryce, living at North Aston, should know anything of a small country incumbency in the North. It was all that study made of his poor parched and knuckly hand! And what had been seen there was manifestly the thing ruled for him by Providence and destiny.

“How could you possibly tell?” he cried, looking at his own hand as if he could read it as his clever friend had done.

“That is my secret,” said Emmanuel, smiling at the credulity on which he traded. Then thinking a flutter outwards of the corners of his cards the best policy in the circumstances about them at the moment, he added: “And when you get there you will understand more than you do now. For you will go!”

“Surely,” said Alick. “It would be unfaithful in me to refuse.”

“But see if you cannot make arrangements to take the place on trial for a few months. I know very little of your ecclesiastical law, but, grant even that it is as devoid of common sense as I should suppose, seeing who are the men who make, administer, and obey it, still I should think that a temporary incumbency might be arranged.”

“I should think so; and I will take your advice,” said Alick, over whom Emmanuel Gryce was fast establishing the power which belongs to the stronger over the weaker, the more astute over the more dense.

“You will find an adopted daughter of mine in the neighbourhood,” then said Mr. Gryce with the most amiable indifference. “She lives with my sister, at our old home on the fell-side; Windy Brow the place is called. You must tell me how she looks, and what you think of her altogether, when you write to me, as I suppose you will do; or when you come home, if you elect not to take the cure even on trial.”

“I am not much in the way of criticising young ladies,” said Alick sadly.

“She is rather a remarkable girl, all things considered,” returned Mr. Gryce quietly. “Her name is Leonora Darley. You will re-

member—Leonora Darley. Ask for her when you go up to Windy Brow; Leonora Darley," for the third time.

"All right; Miss Leonora Darley," repeated Alick, suspecting nothing; and again Mr. Gryce smiled as he dug his fingers into the earth of a chrysalis-box. How pleasant it was to pull the strings and see his puppets dance!

Of course Mr. Birkett's consent was a necessary preliminary to Alick's departure, but there was no difficulty about it. The military rector was tired to death, so he used to say, of his zealous young aide-de-camp; and hailed the prospect of getting rid of him handsomely with a frank pleasure not flattering to poor Alick's self-love.

"Certainly, my dear boy, certainly," he said. "It will be better for you to have a place of your own, where you can carry out your new ideas. You see I am an old man now, and have learnt the value of letting well alone. You are in all the fever-time of zeal and believe that vice and ignorance are like the walls of Jericho, to fall down when you blow your trump. I do not. But on the whole it is as well that you should learn the realities of life for yourself, and carry your energies where they may be useful."

"Then you do not mind?" asked Alick boyishly.

The rector gave a loud clear laugh.

"Mind! a thousand times no!" he said, rubbing his plump white hands. "I can manage well enough alone, and if I cannot there are dozens of young eligibles ready to jump at the place. Mind! no! Go in heaven's name, and may you be blessed in your undertaking!"

The last words came in as grace lines; and with them Alick felt himself dismissed.

If the rector had been facile to deal with Mrs. Corfield was not. When she heard of the proposed arrangement, and that she was to lose her boy for the second time out of her daily life, and more permanently than before, her grief was as intense as if she had been told of his approaching death. She wept bitterly, and even bent herself to entreaty; but Alick, to whom North Aston had become a dungeon of pain since Leam went, held pertinaciously to his plan; not without sorrow but surely without yielding. He was fascinated by the idea of a cure where he might be sole master, not checked by rectorial ridicule when he wished to establish night schools or clothing clubs, penny savings' banks, or any other of the schemes in vogue for the good of the poor; thinking too, not unwisely, that the best heal-all for his sorrow was to be found in change of scene and more arduous work together. Also he thought that if his vague tentative advertisements in the papers, which he dared not make too evident, had as yet brought nothing, some more satisfactory way of discovering Leam's hiding-place might shape itself when he was alone, freer to act as he thought best. On all of which accounts he resisted his mother's grief, and his own at seeing her grieve, and decided on going down to Monk Grange the next day.

Had not Dr. Corfield been ailing at this time the mother would have accompanied her son. The possibility of damp sheets weighed heavy on her mind, and landladies who filch from the teacaddy, with landladies' girls, pert and familiar, preparing insidious gruel and seductive cups of coffee, were the lions which her imagination conjured up as prowling for her Alick through the fastnesses of Monk Grange. Circumstance, however, was stronger than her desire; and happily for Alick she was perforce obliged to remain at home while her darling went out from the parental nest to shake those limp wings of his, and bear himself up unassisted in a new atmosphere in the best way he could.

It was on the cold and rainy evening of a cold and rainy summer's day that Alick arrived at Monk Grange; an evening without a sunset or a moon, stars, or a landscape; painful, mournful, as those who dwell in the North Country know only too well as the tears on its face of beauty. He had driven in a crazy old gig from Wigton, and the nine miles which lay between that not too brilliant town and the desolate fell-side hamlet which he had been so fain to make his own spiritual domain, had not been one to dispose him to a cheerful view of things. The rain had fallen in a steady pitiless downpour which seemed to soak through every outer covering, and to penetrate the very flesh and marrow of the tired traveller, as it pattered noisily on the umbrella and streamed over the leather apron; and the splash of the horse's hoofs through the liquid mud and broad tracts of standing water was as dreary as the "splash, splash" of Bürger's ballad. And when all this was over, and they drew up at the "Blucher," with its handful of desolate grey hovels round it, the heart of the man sank at the gloomy surroundings into the midst of which he had flung himself. But the zeal of the Churchman was as good a tonic for him as the best common sense, and he waited until to-morrow and broad daylight before he allowed himself to even acknowledge an impression. The warm fireside at the "Blucher" cheered him too; and his supper of eggs and bacon and fresh crisp "havre bread" satisfied such of his physical cravings as, unsatisfied, make a man's spiritual perceptions very gaunt.

He went to bed; slept; and the next day woke up to a glory of sun and sky, a brilliancy of colouring, a photographic sharpness and clearness of form, a suggestion of beauty beyond that which was seen, which transformed the place as if an angel had passed through it in the night.

As he tramped about the sordid hamlet he forgot the rude uncouthness of men and place for a kind of ecstasy at the loveliness about him. Every jutting rock of granite shone in the sun like polished jasper, and the numberless little rills trickling down the fell-sides were as threads of silver now concealed in the gold of the gorse and now whitening the purple of the heather. The air was full of happy sounds. Overhead the skylarks sang in jocund rivalry, mounting higher and higher as if they would have beaten their wings against the sun; the bees made the heather and the thyme musical as they flew from flower to flower; and the tink-

ling of the running rills was like the symphony to a changeful theme. It was in real truth a transformation, and the new-comer into the fitful, seductive, disappointing North felt all its beauty, all its meaning, and gave himself up to his delight as if such a day as yesterday had never been.

After he had done what he wished to do in the village he went up the fell-side road to Windy Brow, and, obeying his instructions, asked when he got there "if Miss Leonora Darley was at home."

"Na, she bain't," said Jenny, eyeing poor innocent Alick as a colley might eye a wolf sniffing about the fold. "T' auld mistress is."

"Say Mr. Corfield, please," said Alick; and Jenny, telling him to gang intil't parlour, scuffled off to Keziah, pottering over some pickled red-cabbage, which made the house smell like a vinegar-cask.

"I've heard tell of you," said Miss Gryce, as she came in wiping her hands on a serviceable and by no means luxurious cloth. "Emmanuel wrote me a letter about you. You're kindly welcome to Monk Grange, but you're only a haverel to look at. Take a seat, and tell me—how's Emmanuel, my brother?"

"He was well when I saw him the day before yesterday; at least he said nothing to the contrary," answered Alick with his conscientious literalness.

"I like that," said Keziah, also eyeing him, but as a colley might have eyed a strange sheep, not a wolf. "A random rory would have made no difference between now and two days back, and believing and being. You cannot be over-particular in the truth, I take it."

Alick blushed, shifted his place, and looked uneasy. And again, as so often before, it came across him—had he done right, judged by the highest law, to conceal the truth as he knew it about Leam?

"Hoot, man! there's no call for you to sit on pins and needles in that fashion!" said Keziah. "It's a daft body that cannot hear a word of praise without turning as red as a turkey-cock, and fidging like a parched pea on a drumhead. I've not turned much of you over yet, and maybe I'll come to what I'll have no mind to praise; so keep your fidges till you are touched up with the other end of the stick! And so you are to be our new priest, are you?"

"I am going to offer myself for a time," said Alick.

"For a time? That's a thing as has two sides to it. If you are not to our minds that's its good side; if you are and we are not to yours, that's its bad. I doubt if our folk will care to be played Jumping Joan with in that fashion!"

"I will be guided by the will of the Lord," said Alick reverently.

"Humph! I like the words better nor the chances in them," returned Keziah, taking a pinch of snuff. "But maybe things 'll work round as one would have them; and whether you stay or you do not the Lord's will be done, amen, and His grace follow you, young man."

"Thank you," said Alick with emotion, getting up and shaking the pickle-stained and snuff-discoloured hand.

"I have a message for Miss Leonora Darley," he then said, after a pause. "Mr. Gryce told me I was to be sure and tell him how she was looking."

"Eh, poor bairn, she is not very first-rate," the old woman answered, tenderly—at least it was tenderness in her. In another person her voice and manner might have been taken for crabbedness and impatience. "She's up by there, on the fell somewhere. She a'most lives on the fell-side, but it don't make her look as brisk as I should like. Have you seen the view from our brow-top? It is a real bonny one; and you'll maybe find Leonora not far off. I don't think she wanders far."

"I should like to see it," said Alick. "The country altogether looks splendid to-day."

"Aye, it's a bonny day enough, if it would but last. Come your ways with me and I'll set you out by the back door. You can come in again the same road if you've a mind."

On which she bustled up, and Alick, escorted by her, went through the house and on to the fell-side.

It was, if possible, grander now than it had been in the earlier part of the day. The hot sun had cleared away the lingering mist, and the cloudless sky was like one large perfect opal, while the earth beneath shone and glistened as if it were a jewel set with various-coloured gems. There was not a mean or sordid thing about. Touched by the glowing alchemy of the sun the smallest circumstance was noble, the poorest colour glorious. Alick stood on the fell-brow entranced; then turning, he saw slowly coming across the pathless green a young slight figure dressed in grey. He looked as it came near, and his heart beat with a force that took all power from him. It was absurd, he knew, but there was such a strange look of Leam about that girl! He stood and watched her coming along with that slow, graceful, undulating step which was Leam's birthright. Was he mad? Was he dreaming? What was this mocking trick of eyesight that was perplexing him? Surely it was madness—and yet—no! it could be no one else! Supreme, beloved, who else could personate her so as to cheat him?

She came on, her eyes always fixed on the distance, seeing nothing of Alick standing dark against the sky. She came nearer, nearer, till he saw the glory of her eyes, the curve of her lip, and could count the curling tresses on her brow. Then he came down from the height and strode across the space between them. She lifted up her eyes and saw him.

For an instant the sadness cleared out of them as the mists had cleared from the sky; her pathetic mouth broke into a smile, and she held out both her hands.

"Alick, dear Alick, my good Alick!" she cried in a voice of exquisite tenderness.

"My queen!" he said kneeling, his honest upturned face wet with tears. "Lost and now found!"

Forest Notes.

ON THE PLAIN.

PERHAPS the reader knows already the aspect of the great levels of the Gâtinais, where they border with the wooded hills of Fontainebleau. Here and there, a few grey rocks creep out of the forest as if to sun themselves. Here and there, a few apple-trees stand together on a knoll. The quaint undignified tartan of a myriad small fields dies out into the distance; the strips blend and disappear; and the dead flat lies forth open and empty, with no accident save perhaps a thin line of trees or faint church-spire against the sky. Solemn and vast at all times, in spite of pettiness in the near details, the impression becomes more solemn and vast towards evening. The sun goes down, a swollen orange, as it were, into the sea. A blue-clad peasant rides home, with a harrow smoking behind him among the dry clods. Another still works with his wife in their little strip. An immense shadow fulfils the plain; these people stand in it up to their shoulders; and their heads, as they stoop over their work and rise again, are relieved from time to time against the golden sky.

These peasant farmers are well off now-a-days, and not by any means over-worked; but somehow you always see in them the historical representative of the serf of yore, and think not so much of present times, which may be prosperous enough, as of the old days when the peasant was taxed beyond possibility of payment, and lived, in Michelet's image, like a hare between two furrows. These very people now weeding their patch under the broad sunset, that very man and his wife, it seems to us, have suffered all the wrongs of France. It is they who have been their country's scapegoat for long ages; they who, generation after generation, have sowed and not reaped, reaped and another has garnered; and who have now entered into their reward, and enjoy their good things in their turn. For the days are gone by when the Seigneur ruled and profited. "Le Seigneur," says the old formula, "*enferme ses manants comme sous porte et gonds, du ciel à la terre. Tout est à lui, forêt cheneue, oiseau dans l'air, poisson dans l'eau, bête au buisson, l'onde qui coule, la cloche dont le son au loin roule.*" Such was his old state of sovereignty, a local god rather than a mere king. And now you may ask yourself where he is, and look round for vestiges of my late lord, and in all the countryside there is no trace of him but his forlorn and fallen mansion. At the end of a long avenue, now sown with grain, in the midst of a close full of cypresses and lilacs, ducks and crowing chanticlers and droning bees, the old château lifts its red chimneys and peaked roofs and

turning vanes into the wind and sun. There is a glad spring bustle in the air perhaps, and the lilacs are all in flower, and the creepers green about the broken balustrade; but no spring shall revive the honour of the place. Old women of the people, little children of the people, saunter and gambol in the walled court or feed the ducks in the neglected moat. Plough horses, mighty of limb, browse in the long stables. The dial-hand on the clock waits for some better hour. Out on the plain, where hot sweat trickles into men's eyes and the spade goes in deep and comes up slowly, perhaps the peasant may feel a movement of joy at his heart, when he thinks that these spacious chimneys are now cold which have so often blazed and flickered upon gay folk at supper, while he and his hollow-eyed children watched through the night with empty bellies and cold feet. And perhaps, as he raises his head and sees the forest lying like a coast-line of low hills along the sea-like level of the plain, perhaps forest and château hold no unsimilar place in his affections. If the château was my lord's, the forest was my lord the king's; neither of them for this poor Jacques. If he thought to eke out his meagre way of life by some petty theft of wood for the fire, or for a new roof-tree, he found himself face to face with a whole department from the Grand Master of the Woods and Waters, who was a high-born lord, down to the common sergeant, who was a peasant like himself, and wore stripes or a bandoleer by way of uniform. For the first offence, by the Salic law, there was a fine of fifteen sols; and should a man be taken more than once in fault, or circumstances aggravate the colour of his guilt, he might be whipped, branded, or hanged. There was a hangman over at Melun, and I doubt not a fine tall gibbet hard by the town gate, where Jacques might see his fellows dangle against the sky as he went to market.

And then, if he lived near so great a cover, there would be the more hares and rabbits to eat out his harvest and the more hunters to trample it down. My lord has a new horn from England. He has laid out seven francs in decorating it with silver and gold, and fitting it with a silken leash to hang about his shoulder. The hounds have been on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Mesmer, or Saint Hubert in the Ardennes, or some other holy intercessor who has made a specialty of the health of hunting dogs. In the grey dawn, the game was turned and the branch broken by our best piqueur. A rare day's hunting is before us. Wind a jolly flourish, sound the *bien-aller* with all your lungs! Jacques must stand by, hat in hand, while quarry and hound and huntsman sweep across his field, and a year's sparing and labouring is as though it had not been. If he can see the ruin with a good enough grace, who knows but he may fall in favour with my lord; who knows but his son may become the last and least among the servants at his lordship's kennel—one of the two poor varlets who get no wages, and sleep at night among the hounds!*

* "Deux pources varlez qui n'ont nulz gages et qui gissoient la nuit avec les chiens." See Champollion-Figeac's *Louis et Charles d'Orléans*, I. 63. And for my lord's English horn, *Ibid.*, 96.

For all that, the forest has been of use to Jacques, not only warming him with fallen wood, but giving him shelter in days of sore trouble, when my lord of the château, with all his troopers and trumpets, had been beaten from field after field into some ultimate fastness, or lay overseas in an English prison. In these dark days, when the watch on the church steeple saw the smoke of burning villages on the sky-line, or a clump of spears and fluttering pennon drawing nigh across the plain, these good folk gat them up, with all their household gods, into the wood, whence, from some high spur, their timid scouts might overlook the coming and going of the marauders, and see the harvest ridden down, and church and cottage go up to heaven all night in flame. It was but an unhomely refuge that the woods afforded, where they must abide all change of weather and keep house with wolves and vipers. Often there was none left alive, when they returned, to show the old divisions of field from field. And yet, as times went, when the wolves entered at night into depopulated Paris, and perhaps De Retz was passing by with a company of demons like himself, even in these caves and thickets there were glad hearts and grateful prayers.

Once or twice, as I say, in the course of the ages, the forest may have served the peasant well, but at heart it is a royal forest, and noble by old association. These woods have rung to the horns of all the Kings of France, from Philip Augustus downwards. They have seen Saint Louis exercise the dogs he brought with him from Egypt; Francis I. go a-hunting with ten thousand horses in his train; and Peter of Russia following his first stag. And so they are still haunted for the imagination by royal hunts and progresses, and peopled with the faces of memorable men of yore. And this distinction is not only in virtue of the pastime of dead monarchs. Great events, great revolutions, great cycles in the affairs of men, have here left their note, here taken shape in some significant and dramatic situation. It was hence that Guise and his leaguers led Charles the Ninth a prisoner to Paris. Here, booted and spurred, and with all his dogs about him, Napoleon met the Pope beside a woodland cross. Here, on his way to Elba not so long after, he kissed the eagle of the Old Guard, and spoke words of passionate farewell to his soldiers. And here, after Waterloo, rather than yield its ensign to the new power, one of his faithful regiments burned that memorial of so much toil and glory on the Grand Master's table, and drank its dust in brandy, as a devout priest consumes the remnants of the Host.

IN THE SEASON.

Close in to the edge of the forest, so close that the trees of the *bornage* stand pleasantly about the last houses, sits a certain small and very quiet village. There is but one street, and that, not long ago, was a green lane, where the cattle browsed between the door-steps. As you go up

this street, drawing ever nearer the beginning of the wood, you will arrive at last before an inn where artists lodge. To the door (for I imagine it to be six o'clock on some fine summer's even), half-a-dozen, or maybe half-a-score, of people have brought out chairs, and now sit sunning themselves and waiting the omnibus from Melun. If you go on into the court you will find as many more, some in the billiard-room over absinthe and a match of corks, some without over a last cigar and a vermouth. The doves coo and flutter from the dovecot; Hortense is drawing water from the well; and as all the rooms open into the court, you can see the white-capped cook over the furnace in the kitchen, and some idle painter, who has stored his canvases and washed his brushes, jangling a waltz on the crazy tongue-tied piano in the *salle-à-manger*. "*Edmond, encore un vermouth,*" cries a man in velveteen, adding in a tone of apologetic after-thought, "*un double, s'il vous plaît.*" "Where were you working?" asks one in pure white linen from top to toe. "At the Carrefour de l'Épine," returns another in corduroy (they are all gaitered, by the way). "I couldn't do a thing to it. I ran out of white. Where were you?" "I wasn't working, I was looking for motives." Here is an outbreak of jubilation, and a lot of men clustering together about some new-comer with outreached hands; perhaps the "correspondence" has come in and brought So-and-so from Paris, or perhaps it is only So-and-so who has walked over from Chailly to dinner.

"*A table, Messieurs!*" cries M. Siron, bearing through the court the first tureen of soup. And immediately the company begins to settle down about the long tables, in the dining-room framed all round with sketches of all degrees of merit and demerit. There is the big picture of the huntsman winding a horn, with a dead boar between his legs, and his legs—well, his legs in stockings. And here is the little picture of a raw mutton-chop, in which Such-a-one knocked a hole last summer with no worse a missile than a plum from the dessert. And under all these works of art so much eating goes forward, so much drinking, so much jabbering in French and English, that it would do your heart good merely to peep and listen at the door. One man is telling how they all went last year to the Fête at Fleury, and another how well So-and-so would sing of an evening; and here are a third and fourth making plans for the whole future of their lives; and there is a fifth imitating a conjuror and making faces on his clenched fist, surely of all arts the most difficult and admirable! A sixth has eaten his fill, lights a cigarette, and resigns himself to digestion. A seventh has just dropped in, and calls for soup. Number eight, meanwhile, has left the table, and is once more trampling the poor piano under powerful and uncertain fingers.

Dinner over, people drop outside to smoke and chat. Perhaps we go along to visit our friends at the other end of the village, where there is always a good welcome and a good talk, and perhaps some pickled oysters and white wine to close the evening. Or a dance is organized in the dining-room, and the piano exhibits all its paces under manful jockeying,

to the light of three or four candles and a lamp or two, while the waltzers move to and fro upon the wooden floor, and sober men, who are not given to such light pleasures, get up on the table or the sideboard and sit there looking on approvingly, over a pipe and a tumbler of wine. Or sometimes—suppose my lady moon looks forth, and the court from out the half-lit dining-room seems nearly as bright as by day, and the light picks out the window-panes, and makes a clear shadow under every vine-leaf on the wall—sometimes a picnic is proposed, and a basket made ready, and a good procession formed in front of the hotel. The two trumpeters in honour go before; and as we file down the long alley, and up through devious footpaths among rocks and pine-trees, with every here and there a dark passage of shadow, and every here and there a spacious outlook over moonlit woods, these two precede us and sound many a jolly flourish as they walk. We gather ferns and dry boughs into the cavern, and soon a good blaze flutters the shadows of the old bandits' haunt, and shows shapely beards and comely faces and toilettes ranged about the wall. The bowl is lit, and the punch burned and sent around in scalding thimblefuls. So a good hour or two may pass with song and jest. And then we go home in the moonlight morning, straggling a good deal among the birch-tufts and the boulders, but ever called together again, as one of our leaders winds his horn. Perhaps some one of the party will not heed the summons, but chooses out some by-way of his own. As he follows the winding sandy road, he hears the flourishes grow fainter and fainter in the distance, and die finally out, and still walks on in the strange coolness and silence and between the crisp lights and shadows of the moonlit woods, until suddenly the bell rings out the hour from far away Chailly, and he starts to find himself alone. No surf-bell on forlorn and perilous shores, no passing knoll over the busy marketplace, can speak with a more heavy and disconsolate tongue to human ears. Each stroke calls up a host of ghostly reverberations in his mind. And as he stands rooted, it has grown once more so utterly silent that it seems to him he might hear the church bells ring the hour out all the world over, not at Chailly only, but in Paris, and away in outlandish cities, and in the village on the river, where his childhood passed between the sun and flowers.

IDLE HOURS.

The woods by night, in all their uncanny effect, are not rightly to be understood until you can compare them with the woods by day. The stillness of the medium, the floor of glittering sand, these trees that go streaming up like monstrous sea-weeds and waver in the moving winds like the weeds in submarine currents, all these set the mind working on the thought of what you may have seen off a foreland or over the side of a boat, and make you feel like a diver, down in the quiet water, fathoms below the tumbling, transitory surface of the sea. And yet in

itself, as I say, the strangeness of these nocturnal solitudes is not to be felt fully without the sense of contrast. You must have risen in the morning and seen the woods as they are by day, kindled and coloured in the sun's light; you must have felt the odour of innumerable trees at even, the unsparing heat along the forest roads and the coolness of the groves.

And on the first morning, you will doubtless rise betimes. If you have not been wakened before by the visit of some adventurous pigeon, you will be wakened as soon as the sun can reach your window—for there are no blinds or shutters to keep him out—and the room, with its bare wood floor and bare whitewashed walls, shines all round you in a sort of glory of reflected lights. You may doze a while longer by snatches, or lie awake to study the charcoal-men and dogs and horses with which former occupants have defiled the partitions; Thiers, with wily profile; local celebrities, pipe in hand; or maybe a romantic landscape, splashed in oil. Meanwhile artist after artist drops into the *salle-à-manger* for coffee, and then shoulders easel, sunshade, stool, and paint-box, bound into a faggot, and sets off for what he calls his "motive." And artist after artist, as he goes out of the village, carries with him a little following of dogs. For the dogs, who belong only nominally to any special master, hang about the gate of the forest all day long, and whenever any one goes by, who hits their fancy, profit by his escort, and go forth with him to play an hour or two at hunting. They would like to be under the trees all day. But they cannot go alone. They require a pretext. And so they take the passing artist as an excuse to go into the woods, as they might take a walking-stick as an excuse to bathe. With quick ears, long spines, and bandy legs, or perhaps as tall as a greyhound and with a bulldog's head, this company of mongrels will trot by your side all day and come home with you at night, still showing white teeth and wagging stunted tail. Their good humour is not to be exhausted. You may pelt them with stones, if you please, and all they will do is to give you a wider berth. If once they come out with you, to you they will remain faithful, and with you return; although if you meet them next morning in the street, it is as like as not they will cut you with a countenance of brass.

The forest—a strange thing for an Englishman—is very destitute of birds. This is no country where every patch of wood among the meadows gives up an incense of song, and every valley, wandered through by a streamlet, rings and reverberates from side to side with a profusion of clear notes. And this rarity of birds is not to be regretted on its own account only. For the insects prosper in their absence, and become as one of the plagues of Egypt. Ants swarm in the hot sand; mosquitoes drone their nasal drone; wherever the sun finds a hole in the roof of the forest you see a myriad transparent creatures coming and going in the shaft of light; and even between whiles, even where there is no incursion of sun-rays into the dark arcade of the wood, you are

conscious of a continual drift of insects, an ebb and flow of infinitesimal living things between the trees. Nor are insects the only evil creatures that haunt the forest. For you may plump into a cave among the rocks, and find yourself face to face with a wild boar; or see a crooked viper slither across the road.

Perhaps you may set yourself down in the bay between two spreading beech-roots with a book on your lap, and be awakened all of a sudden by a friend: "I say, just keep where you are, will you? You make the jolliest motive." And you reply: "Well, I don't mind, if I may smoke." And thereafter the hours go idly by. Your friend at the easel labours doggedly, a little way off, in the wide shadow of the tree; and yet farther, across a strait of glaring sunshine, you see another painter, encamped in the shadow of another tree, and up to his waist in the fern. You cannot watch your own effigy growing out of the white trunk, and the trunk beginning to stand forth from the rest of the wood, and the whole picture getting dappled over with the flecks of sun, that slip through the leaves overhead, and as a wind goes by and sets the trees a-talking, flicker hither and thither like butterflies of light. But you know it is going forward; and, out of emulation with the painter, get ready your own palette and lay out the colour for a woodland scene in words.

Your tree stands in a hollow paved with fern and heather, set in a basin of low hills, and scattered over with rocks and junipers. All the open is steeped in pitiless sunlight. Everything stands out as though it were cut in cardboard, every colour is strained into its highest key. The boulders are some of them upright and dead like monolithic castles, some of them prone like sleeping cattle. The junipers—looking, in their soiled and ragged mourning, like some funeral procession that has gone seeking the place of sepulture three hundred years and more in wind and rain—are daubed in, forcibly against the glowing ferns and heather. Every tassel of their rusty foliage is defined with *præ-Raphaelite* minuteness. And a sorry figure they make out there in the sun, like misbegotten yew-trees! The scene is all pitched in a key of colour so peculiar, and lit up with such a discharge of violent sunlight as a man might live fifty years in England and not see.

Meanwhile at your elbow some one tunes up a song, words of *Ronsard* to a pathetic tremulous air, of how the poet loved his mistress long ago, and pressed on her the flight of time, and told her how white and quiet the dead lay under the stones, and how the boat dipped and pitched as the shades embarked for the passionless land. Yet a little while, sang the poet, and there shall be no more love; only to sit, and remember loves that might have been. There is a falling flourish in the air that remains in the memory and comes back in incongruous places, on the seat of hansoms or in the warm bed at night, with something of a forest savour.

"You can get up now," says the painter; "I'm at the background."

And so up you get, stretching yourself, and go your way into the wood, the daylight becoming richer and more golden, and the shadows stretching further into the open. A cool air comes along the highways, and the scents awaken. The fir-trees breathe abroad their ozone. Out of unknown thickets comes forth the soft, secret, aromatic odour of the woods, not like a smell of the free heaven, but as though court ladies, who had known these paths in ages long gone by, still walked in the summer evenings, and shed, from their brocades, a breath of musk or bergamot upon the woodland winds. One side of the long avenues is still kindled with the sun, the other is plunged in transparent shadow. Over the trees, the west begins to burn like a furnace; and the painters gather up their chattels, and go down, by avenue or footpath, to the plain.

A PLEASURE PARTY.

As this excursion is a matter of some length, and moreover we go in force, we have set aside our usual vehicle, the pony cart, and ordered a large wagonette from Lejosne's. It has been waiting for near an hour, while one went to pack a knapsack, and t'other hurried over his toilette and coffee; but now it is filled from end to end with merry folk in summer attire, the coachman cracks his whip, and amid much applause from round the inn door, off we rattle at a spanking trot. The way lies through the forest, up hill and down dale, and by beech and pine wood, in the cheerful morning sunshine. The English get down at all the ascents and walk on a-head for exercise; the French are mightily entertained at this, and keep coily underneath the tilt. As we go we carry with us a pleasant noise of laughter and light speech, and some one will be always breaking out into a bar or two of opera bouffe. Before we get to the Route Ronde here comes Desprez, the colourman from Fontainebleau, trudging across on his weekly peddle with a case of merchandise; and it is, "Desprez, leave me some malachite green;" "Desprez, leave me so much canvas;" "Desprez, leave me this, or leave me that;" M. Desprez standing the while in the sunlight with grave face and many salutations. The next interruption is more important. For some time back we have had the sound of cannon in our ears; and now, a little past Franchard, we find a mounted trooper holding a led horse, who brings the wagonette to a stand. The artillery is practising in the Quadrilateral, it appears; passage along the Route Ronde formally interdicted for the moment. There is nothing for it but to draw up at the glaring cross-roads, and get down to make fun with the notorious Cocardon, the most ungainly and ill-bred dog of all the ungainly and ill-bred dogs of Barbizon, or clamber about the sandy banks. And meanwhile the Doctor, with sun umbrella, wide panama, and patriarchal beard, is busy wheedling and (for ought the rest of us know) bribing the too facile sentry. His speech is smooth and dulcet, his manner

dignified and insinuating. It is not for nothing that the Doctor has voyaged all the world over, and speaks all languages, from French to Patagonian. He has not come home from perilous journeys to be thwarted by a corporal of horse. And so we soon see the soldier's mouth relax, and his shoulders intimate a relenting heart. "En voiture, Messieurs, Mesdames," sings the Doctor; and on we go again at a good round pace, for black care follows hard after us, and discretion prevails not a little over valour in some timorous spirits of the party. At any moment we may meet the sergeant, who will send us back. At any moment we may encounter a flying shell, which will send us somewhere further off than Grez.

Grez—for that is our destination—has been highly recommended for its beauty. "Il y a de l'eau," people have said, with an emphasis, as if that settled the question, which, for a French mind, I am rather led to think it does. And Grez, when we get there, is indeed a place worthy of some praise. It lies out of the forest, a cluster of houses, with an old bridge, an old castle in ruin, and a quaint old church. The inn garden descends in terraces to the river; stable-yard, kail-yard, orchard, and a space of lawn, fringed with rushes and embellished with a green arbour. On the opposite bank there is a reach of English-looking plain, set thickly with willows and poplars. And between the two lies the river, clear and deep and full of reeds and floating lilies. Water-plants cluster about the starlings of the long low bridge, and stand half-way up upon the piers in green luxuriance. They catch the dipped oar with long antennæ, and chequer the slimy bottom with the shadow of their leaves. And the river wanders hither and thither among the islets, and is smothered and broken up by the weeds, like an old building in the lithe hardy arms of the climbing ivy. You may watch the box where the good man of the inn keeps fish alive for his kitchen, one oily ripple following another over the top of the yellow deal. And you can hear a splashing and a prattle of voices from the shed under the old kirk, where the village women wash and wash all day, among the fish and water-lilies. It seems as if linen washed there should be specially cool and sweet.

We have come here for the river. And no sooner have we all bathed than we board the two shallops, and push off gaily, and go gliding under the trees and gathering a great treasure of water-lilies. Some one sings; some trail their hands in the cool water; some lean over the gunwale, to see the image of the tall poplars far below, and the shadow of the boat with the balanced oars and their own head protruded, glide smoothly over the yellow floor of the stream. At last, the day declining—all silent and happy, and up to the knees in the wet lilies—we punt slowly back again to the landing-place beside the bridge. There is a wish for solitude on all. One hides himself in the arbour with a cigarette; another goes a walk in the country with Cocardon; a third inspects the church. And it is not till dinner is on the table, and

the inn's best wine goes round from glass to glass, that we begin to throw off the restraint and fuse once more into a jolly fellowship.

Half the party are to return to-night with the wagonette, and some of the others, loth to break up good company, will go with them a bit of the way and drink a stirrup-cup at Marlotte. It is dark in the wagonette, and not so merry as it might have been. The coachman loses the road. So-and-so tries to light fireworks with the most indifferent success. Some sing, but the rest are too weary to applaud; and it seems as if the festival were fairly at an end :

Nous avons fait la noce,
Rentrons à nos foyers !

And such is the burthen, even after we have come to Marlotte and taken our places in the court at Mother Antonine's. There is punch on the long table out in the open air, where the guests dine in summer weather. The candles flare in the night wind, and the faces around the punch are lit up, with shifting emphasis, against a background of complete and solid darkness. It is all picturesque enough; but the fact is, we are weary. We yawn; we are out of the vein; we have made the wedding, as the song says, and now, for pleasure's sake, let's make an end on't. When here comes striding into the court, booted to mid thigh, spurred and splashed, in a jacket of green cord, the great famous and redoubtable Blank; and in a moment the fire kindles again, and the night is witness of our laughter as he imitates Spaniards, Germans, Englishmen, picture-dealers, all eccentric ways of speaking and thinking, with a possession, a fury, a strain of mind and voice, that would rather suggest a nervous crisis than a desire to please. We are as merry as ever when the trap sets forth again, and say farewell noisily to all the good-folk going further. Then, as we are far enough from thoughts of sleep, we visit Blank in his quaint house, and sit an-hour or so in a great-tapestried chamber, laid with furs, littered with sleeping hounds, and lit up, in fantastic shadow and shine, by a wood fire in a mediæval chimney. And then we plod back through the darkness to the inn beside the river.

How quick bright things come to confusion! When we arise next morning, the grey showers fall steadily, the trees hang limp, and the face of the stream is spoiled with dimpling raindrops. Yesterday's lilies encumber the garden walk, or begin, dismally enough, their voyage towards the Seine and the salt sea. A sickly shimmer lies upon the dripping house roofs, and all the colour is washed out of the green and golden landscape of last night, as though an envious man had taken a water-colour sketch and blotted it together with a sponge. We go out a-walking in the wet roads; but the roads about Grez have a trick of their own: they go on for a while among clumps of willows and patches of vine, and then, suddenly and without any warning, cease and determine in some miry hollow or upon some bald knove; you have a short period of hope, then right about face, and back the way you came! So we draw

about the kitchen fire and play a round game of cards for ha'pence, or go to the billiard-room for a match at corks; and by one consent, a messenger is sent over for the wagonette—Greze shall be left to-morrow.

To-morrow dawns so fair that two of the party agree to walk back for exercise, and let their knapsacks follow by the trap. I need hardly say they are neither of them French; for of all English phrases, the phrase "for exercise" is the least comprehensible across the straits of Dover. All goes well for a while with the pedestrians. The wet woods are full of scents in the noontide. At a certain cross, where there is a guard-house, they make a halt, for the forester's wife is the daughter of their good host at Barbizon. And so there they are hospitably received by the comely woman, with one child in her arms and another prattling and tottering at her gown, and drink some syrup of quince in the back parlour, with a map of the forest on the wall, and some prints of love affairs and the great Napoleon hunting. As they draw near the Quadrilateral, and hear once more the report of the big guns, they take a by-road to avoid the sentries, and go on a while somewhat vaguely, with the sound of the cannon in their ears and the rain beginning to fall. The ways grow wider and sandier; here and there there are real sand-hills as though by the sea-shore; the firwood is open and grows in clumps upon the hillocks, and the race of sign-posts is no more. One begins to look at the other doubtfully. "I am sure we should keep more to the right," says one; and the other is just as certain they should hold to the left. And now, suddenly, the heavens open and the rain falls "sheer and strong and loud," as out of a shower-bath. In a moment, they are as wet as shipwrecked sailors; they cannot see out of their eyes for the drift, and the water churns and gurgles in their boots. They leave the track, and try across country with a gambler's desperation; for it seems as if it were impossible to make the situation worse; and, for the next hour, go scrambling from boulder to boulder, or plod along paths that are now no more than rivulets, and across waste clearings where the scattered shells and broken fir-trees tell all too plainly of the cannon in the distance. And meantime the cannon grumble out responses to the grumbling thunder. There is such a mixture of melodrama and sheer discomfort about all this, it is at once so gray and so lurid, that it is far more agreeable to read and write about by the chimney-corner, than to suffer in the person. At last, they chance on the right path, and make Franchard in the early evening, the sorriest pair of wanderers that ever welcomed English ale. Thence, by the Bois d'Hyver, the Ventres-Alexandre, and the Pins Brulés, to the clean hostelry, dry clothes, and dinner.

THE WOODS IN SPRING.

I think you will like the forest best in the sharp early springtime, when it is just beginning to reawaken and innumerable violets peep from among the fallen leaves; when two or three people at most sit down to dinner; and, at table, you will do well to keep a rug about your knees, for the nights are chill, and the *salle-à-manger* opens on the court. There is less to distract the attention for one thing, and the forest is more itself; it is not bedotted with artists' sunshades as with unknown mushrooms, nor bestrewn with the remains of English picnics. The hunting still goes on, and at any moment your heart may be brought into your mouth as you hear far-away horns, or you may be told by an agitated peasant that the *Vicomte* has gone up the avenue, not ten minutes since, "*à fond de train, monsieur, et avec douze piqueurs.*"

If you go up to some coign of vantage in the system of low hills that permeates the forest, you will see many different tracts of country, each of its own cold and melancholy neutral tint, and all mixed together and mingled one into the other at the seams. You will see tracts of leafless beeches of a faint yellowish gray, and leafless oaks a little ruddier in the hue. Then zones of pine of a solemn green, and, dotted among the pines or standing by themselves in rocky clearings, the delicate snow-white trunks of birches, spreading out into snow-white branches yet more delicate, and crowned and canopied with a purple haze of twigs. And then a long bare ridge of tumbled boulders, with bright sandbreaks between them, and wavering sandy roads among the bracken and brown heather. It is all rather cold and unhomely; it has not the perfect beauty, not the gemlike colouring, of the wood in the later year, when it is no more than one vast colonnade of verdant shadow, tremulous with insects, intersected here and there by lanes of sunlight set in purple heather. The loveliness of the woods in March is not, assuredly, of this blowsy, rustic type. It is made sharp with a grain of salt, with a touch of ugliness; it has a sting like the sting of bitter ale; you acquire the love of it as men acquire a taste for olives. And the wonderful clear, pure air wells into your lungs the while, by voluptuous inhalations, and makes the eyes bright, and sets the heart ticking to a new tune. Or rather, to an old tune; for you remember in your boyhood something akin to this spirit of adventure, this thirst for exploration, that now takes you masterfully by the hand, plunges you into many a deep grove and drags you over many a stony crest. It is as though the whole wood were full of friendly voices calling you farther in, and you turn from one side to another, like Buridan's donkey, in a maze of pleasure.

Comely beeches send up their white, straight, clustered branches, barred with green moss, like so many fingers from a half-clenched hand. Mighty oaks stand to the ankles in a fine tracery of underwood;

thence, the tall shaft climbs upward, and the great forest of stalwart boughs spreads out into the golden evening sky, where the rooks are flying and calling. On the sward of the Bois d'Hyver, the firs stand well asunder with outspread arms, like fencers saluting; and the air smells of resin all around, and the sound of the axe is rarely still. But strangest of all, and in appearance oldest of all, are the dim and wizard upland districts of young wood. The ground is carpeted with fir-tassel, and strewn with fir-apples and flakes of fallen bark. Rocks lie crouching in the thicket, guttered with rain, tufted with lichen, white with years and the rigours of the changeful seasons. Brown and yellow butterflies are sown and carried away again by the light air—like thistledown. The loneliness of these coverts is so excessive, that there are moments when pleasure draws to the verge of fear. You listen and listen for some noise to break the silence, till you grow half mesmerised by the intensity of the strain; your sense of your own identity is troubled; your brain reels, like that of some gymnosophyst poring on his own nose in Asiatic jungles; and should you see your own outspread feet, you see them, not as anything of yours, but as a feature of the scene around you.

Still the forest is always, but the stillness is not always unbroken. You can hear the wind pass in the distance over the tree-tops; sometimes briefly, like the noise of a train; sometimes with a long steady rush, like the breaking of waves. And sometimes, close at hand, the branches move, a moan goes through the thicket, and the wood thrills to its heart. Perhaps you may hear a carriage on the road to Fontainebleau, a bird gives a dry continual chirp, the dead leaves rustle underfoot, or you may time your steps to the steady recurrent strokes of the woodman's axe. From time to time, over the low grounds, a flight of rooks goes by; and from time to time, the cooing of wild doves falls upon the ear, not sweet and rich and near at hand as in England, but a sort of voice of the woods, thin and far away, as fits these solemn places. Or you hear suddenly the hollow, eager, violent barking of dogs; scared deer flit past you through the fringes of the wood; then a man or two running, in green blouse, with gun and game-bag on a bandoleer; and then, out of the thick of the trees, comes the jar of rifle-shots. Or perhaps the hounds are out, and horns are blown, and scarlet-coated huntsmen flash through the clearings, and the solid noise of horses galloping passes below you, where you sit perched among the rocks and heather. The boar is afoot, and all over the forest and in all neighbouring villages, there is a vague excitement and a vague hope; for who knows whither the chase may lead? and even to have seen a single piqueur or spoken to a single sportsman, is to be a man of consequence for the night.

Besides men who shoot and men who ride with the hounds, there are few people in the forest, in the early spring, save woodcutters plying their axes steadily, and old women and children gathering wood for the fire. You may meet such a party coming home in the twilight: the old

woman laden with a faggot of chips, and the little ones hauling a long branch behind them in her wake. That is the worst of what there is to encounter; and if I tell you of what once happened to a friend of mine, it is by no means to tantalize you with false hopes; for the adventure was unique. It was on a very cold, still, sunless morning, with a flat grey sky and a frosty tingle in the air, that this friend (who shall here be nameless) heard the notes of a key-bugle played with much hesitation, and saw the smoke of a fire spread out along the green pine-tops, in a remote uncanny glen, hard by a hill of naked boulders. He drew near warily, and beheld a picnic party seated under a tree in an open. The old father knitted a sock, the mother sat staring at the fire. The eldest son, in the uniform of a private of dragoons, was choosing out notes on a key-bugle. Two or three daughters lay in the neighbourhood picking violets. And the whole party as grave and silent as the woods around them! My friend watched for a long time, he says; but all held their peace; not one spoke or smiled; only the dragoon kept choosing out single notes upon the bugle, and the father knitted away at his work, and made strange movements the while with his flexible eyebrows. They took no notice whatever of my friend's presence, which was disquieting in itself, and increased the resemblance of the whole party to mechanical waxworks. Certainly, he affirms, a wax figure might have played the bugle with more spirit than that strange dragoon. And as this hypothesis of his became more certain, the awful insolubility of why they should be left out there in the woods with nobody to wind them up again when they ran down, and a growing disquietude as to what might happen next, became too much for his courage, and he turned tail, and fairly took to his heels. It might have been a singing in his ears, but he fancies he was followed, as he ran, by a peal of Titanic laughter. Nothing has ever transpired to clear up the mystery; it may be they were automata; or it may be (and this is the theory to which I lean myself), that this is all another chapter for Heine's "Gods in Exile;" that the upright old man with the eyebrows was no other than Father Jove, and the young dragoon with the taste for music either Apollo or Mars.

MORALITY.

Strange indeed is the attraction of the forest for the minds of men. Not one nor two only, but a great chorus of grateful voices have arisen to spread abroad its fame. Half the famous writers of modern France have had their word to say about Fontainebleau. Chateaubriand, Michelet, Béranger, George Sand, de Sénancour, Flaubert, Murger, the brothers Goncourt, Théodore de Banville, each of these has done something to the eternal praise and memory of these woods. Even at the very worst of times, even when the picturesque was anathema in the eyes of all Persons of Taste, the forest still preserved a certain reputa-

tion for beauty. It was in 1780 that the Abbé Guilbert published his *Historical Description of the Palace, Town, and Forest of Fontainebleau*. And very droll it is to see him, as he tries to set forth his admiration in terms of what was then permissible. The monstrous rocks, &c., says the Abbé, "sont admirées avec surprise des voyageurs qui s'écrient aussitôt avec Horace: Ut mihi devio rupes et vacuum nemus mirari libet." The good man is not exactly lyrical in his praise; and you see how he sets his back against Horace as against a trusty oak. Horace, at any rate, was classical. For the rest, however, the Abbé likes places where many alleys meet; or which, like the Belle-Etoile, are kept up "by a special gardener," and admires at the Table du Roi the labours of the Grand Master of Woods and Waters, the Sieur de la Fature, "qui a fait faire ce magnifique endroit."

But indeed it is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men's hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of the air, that emanation from the old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit. Disappointed men, sick Francis Firsts and vanquished Grand Monarchs, time out of mind have come here for consolation. Hither perplexed folk have retired out of the press of life, as into a deep bay-window on some night of masquerade, and here found quiet and silence, and rest, the mother of wisdom. It is the great moral spa; this forest without a fountain is itself the true fountain of Juven-tius. It is the best place in the world to bring an old sorrow that has been a long while your friend and enemy; and if, like Béranger's, your gaiety has run away from home and left open the door for sorrow to come in, of all covers in Europe, it is here you may expect to find the triant hid. With every hour you change. The air penetrates through your clothes, and nestles to your living body. You love exercise and slumber, long fasting and full meals. You forget all your scruples and live awhile in peace and freedom, and for the moment only. For here, all is absent that can stimulate to moral feeling. Such people as you see may be old, or toilworn, or sorry; but you see them framed in the forest, like figures on a painted canvas; and for you, they are not people in any living and kindly sense. You forget the grim contrariety of interests. You forget the narrow lane where all men jostle together in unchivalrous contention, and the kennel, deep and unclean, that gapes on either hand for the defeated. Life is simple enough, it seems, and the very idea of sacrifice becomes like a mad fancy out of a last night's dream.

Your ideal is not perhaps high, but it is plain and possible. You become enamoured of a life of change and movement and the open air, where the muscles shall be more exercised than the affections. When you have had your will of the forest, you may visit the whole round world. You may buckle on your knapsack and take the road on foot. You may bestride a good nag, and ride forth, with a pair of saddle-bags, into the enchanted East. You may cross the Black Forest, and see

Germany widespread before you, like a map, dotted with old cities, walled and spired, that dream all day on their own reflections in the Rhine or Danube. You may pass the spinal cord of Europe, and go down from Alpine glaciers to where Italy extends her marble moles and glasses her marble palaces in the midland sea. You may sleep in flying trains or wayside taverns. You may be awakened at dawn by the scream of the express or the small pipe of the robin in the hedge. For you the rain should allay the dust of the beaten road; the wind dry your clothes upon you as you walked. Autumn should hang out russet pears and purple grapes along the lane; inn after inn proffer you their cups of raw wine; river by river receive your body in the sultry noon. Wherever you went warm valleys and high trees and pleasant villages should compass you about; and light fellowships should take you by the arm, and walk with you an hour upon your way. You may see, from afar off, what it will come to in the end—the weather-beaten red-nosed vagabond, consumed by a fever of the feet, cut off from all near touch of human sympathy, a waif, an Ishmael, and an outcast. And yet it will seem well—and yet, in the air of the forest, this will seem the best—to break all the network bound about your feet by birth and old companionship and loyal love, and bear your shovelful of phosphates to and fro, in town and country, until the hour of the great dissolvent.

Or, perhaps, you will keep to the cover. For the forest is by itself, and forest life owns small kinship with life in the dismal land of labour. Men are so far sophisticated that they cannot take the world as it is given to them by the sight of their eyes. Not only what they see and hear, but what they know to be behind, enter into their notion of a place. If the sea, for instance, lie just across the hills, sea-thoughts will come to them at intervals, and the tenor of their dreams from time to time will suffer a sea-change. And so here, in this forest, a knowledge of its greatness is for much in the effect produced. You reckon up the miles that lie between you and intrusion. You may walk before you all day long, and not fear to touch the barrier of your Eden, or stumble out of fairyland into the land of gin and steam-hammers. And there is an old tale enhances for the imagination the grandeur of the woods of France, and secures you in the thought of your seclusion. When Charles VI. hunted in the time of his wild boyhood near Senlis, there was captured an old stag, having a collar of bronze about his neck, and these words engraved on the collar: "*Cæsar mihi hoc donavit.*" It is no wonder if the minds of men were moved at this occurrence, and they stood aghast to find themselves thus touching hands with forgotten ages, and following an antiquity with hound and horn. And even for you, it is scarcely in an idle curiosity that you ponder how many centuries this stag had carried its free antlers through the wood, and how many summers and winters had shone and snowed on the imperial badge. If the extent of solemn wood could thus safeguard a tall stag

from the hunters' hounds and horses, might not you also play hide and seek, in these groves, with all the pangs and trepidations of man's life, and elude Death, the mighty hunter, for more than the span of human years? Here, also, crash his arrows; here, in the farthest glade, sounds the gallop of the pale horse. But he does not hunt this cover with all his hounds, for the game is thin and small: and if you were but alert and wary, if you lodged ever in the deepest thickets, you too might live on into later generations, and astonish men by your stalwart age and the trophies of an immemorial success.

For the forest takes away from you all excuse to die. There is nothing here to cabin or thwart your free desires. Here all the impudencies of the brawling world reach you no more. You may count your hours, like Endymion, by the strokes of the lone woodcutter, or by the progression of the lights and shadows, and the sun wheeling his wide circuit through the naked heavens. Here shall you see no enemies but winter and rough weather. And if a pang comes to you at all, it will be a pang of healthful hunger. All the puling sorrows, all the carking repentance, all this talk of duty that is no duty, in the great peace, in the pure daylight of these woods, fall away from you like a garment. And if perchance you come forth upon an eminence, where the wind blows upon you large and fresh, and the pines knock their long stems together, like an ungainly sort of puppets, and see far away over the plain a factory chimney defined against the pale horizon—it is for you, as for the staid and simple peasant when, with his plough, he upturns old arms and harness from the furrow of the glebe. Ay, sure enough, there was a battle there in the old times; and, sure enough, there is a world out yonder where men strive together with a noise of oaths and weeping and clamorous dispute. So much you apprehend by an athletic act of the imagination. A faint far-off rumour as of Merovingian wars: a legend as of some dead religion.

R. L. S.

A Rhyme of One.

You sleep upon your mother's breast,
 Your race begun,
 A welcome, long a wish'd-for guest,
 Whose age is One.

A baby-boy, you wonder why
 You cannot run;
 You try to talk—how hard you try!—
 You're only One.

Ere long you won't be such a dunce;
 You'll eat your bun,
 And fly your kite, like folk, who once
 Were only One.

You'll rhyme, and woo, and fight, and joke,
 Perhaps you'll pun;
 Such feats are never done by folk
 Before they're One.

Some day, too, you may have your joy,
 And envy none;
 Yes, you, yourself, may own a boy
 Who isn't One.

He'll dance, and laugh, and crow, he'll do
 As you have done;
 (You crown a happy home, tho' you
 Are only One).

But when he's grown shall you be here
 To share his fun,
 And talk of days when he (the dear!)
 Was hardly One?

Dear child, 'tis your poor lot to be
 My little son;
 I'm glad, though I am old, you see,—
 While you are One.

FREDERICK LOCKER.

Hours in a Library.

No. XII.—MACAULAY.

LORD MACAULAY was pre-eminently a fortunate man; and his good fortune has survived him. Few, indeed, in the long line of English authors whom he loved so well have been equally happy in a biographer. Most official biographies are a mixture of bungling and indiscretion. It is only in virtue of some happy coincidence that, amongst the one or two people who alone have the requisite knowledge, there exists also the requisite skill and discretion. Mr. Trevelyan is one of the exceptions to the rule. His book is such a piece of thorough literary workmanship as would have delighted its subject. By a rare felicity, the almost filial affection of the narrator conciliates the reader instead of exciting a distrust of the narrative. We feel that Macaulay's must have been a loveable character to excite such warmth of feeling, and a noble character to enable one who loved him to speak so frankly. The ordinary biographer's idolatry is not absent, but it becomes a testimony to the hero's excellence instead of introducing a disturbing element into our estimate of his merits.

No reader of Macaulay's works will be surprised at the manliness which is stamped not less plainly upon them than upon his whole career. But few who were not in some degree behind the scenes would be prepared for the tenderness of nature which is equally conspicuous. We all recognized in Macaulay a lover of truth and political honour. We find no more than we expected, when we are told that the one circumstance upon which he looked back with some regret was the unauthorized publication by a constituent of a letter in which he had spoken too frankly of a political ally. That is indeed an infinitesimal stain upon the character of a man who rose without wealth or connection, by sheer force of intellect, to a conspicuous position amongst politicians. But we find something more than we expected in the singular beauty of Macaulay's domestic life. In his relations to his father, his sisters, and the younger generation, he was admirable. The stern religious principle and profound absorption in philanthropic labours of old Zachary Macaulay must have made the position of his brilliant son anything but an easy one. He could hardly read a novel, or contribute to a worldly magazine, without calling down something like a reproof. The father seems to have indulged in the very questionable practice of listening to vague gossip about his son's conduct, and de-

manding explanations from the supposed culprit. The stern old gentleman carefully suppressed his keen satisfaction at his son's first oratorical success, and instead of praising him, growled at him for folding his arms in the presence of royalty. Many sons have turned into consummate hypocrites under such paternal discipline, and, as a rule, the system is destructive of anything like mutual confidence. Macaulay seems, in spite of all, to have been on the most cordial terms with his father to the last. Some suppression of his sentiments must indeed have been necessary; and we cannot avoid tracing certain peculiarities of the son's intellectual career to his having been condemned from an early age to habitual reticence upon the deepest of all subjects of thought.

Macaulay's relations to his sisters are sufficiently revealed in a long series of charming letters, showing, both in their playfulness and in their literary and political discussions, the unreserved respect and confidence which united them. One of them writes upon his death: "We have lost the light of our home, the most tender, loving, generous, unselfish, devoted of friends. What he was to me for fifty years who can tell? What a world of love he poured out upon me and mine!" Reading these words at the close of the biography, we do not wonder at the glamour of sisterly affection; but admit them to be the natural expression of a perfectly sincere conviction. Can there be higher praise? His relation to children is equally charming. "He was beyond comparison the best of playfellows," writes Mr. Trevelyan; "unrivalled in the invention of games, and never weary of repeating them." He wrote long letters to his favourites; he addressed pretty little poems to them on their birthdays, and composed long nursery rhymes for their edification; whilst overwhelmed with historical labours, and grudging the demands of society, he would dawdle away whole mornings with them, and spend the afternoon in taking them to sights; he would build up a den with newspapers behind the sofa, and act the part of tiger or brigand; he would take them to the Tower, or Madame Tussaud's, or the Zoological Gardens, make puns to enliven the Polytechnic, and tell innumerable anecdotes to animate the statues in the British Museum; he would provide them with sumptuous feasts, invariably accompanied by some inappropriate delicacy, in order to amuse himself at its contemptuous rejection; nor, as they grew older, did he neglect the more dignified duty of inoculating them with the literary tastes which had been the consolation of his life. Obviously he was the ideal uncle—the uncle of optimistic fiction, but with qualifications for his task such as few fictitious uncles can possess. It need hardly be added, that Macaulay was a man of noble liberality in money-matters, that he helped his family when they were in difficulties, and was beloved by the servants who depended upon him. In his domestic relations he had, according to his nephew, only one serious fault—he did not appreciate canine excellence; but no man is perfect.

The thorough kindness of the man reconciles us even to his good fortune. He was an infant phenomenon; the best boy at school; in his

college days, "ladies, artists, politicians, and diners-out" at Bowood, formed a circle to hear him talk, from breakfast to dinner-time; he was famous as an author at twenty-five; accepted as a great parliamentary orator at thirty; and as a natural consequence caressed with effusion by editors, politicians, Whig magnates, and the clique of Holland House; by thirty-three he had become a man of mark in society, literature, and politics, and had secured his fortune by gaining a seat in the Indian Council. His later career was a series of triumphs. He had been the main support of the greatest literary organ of his party, and the "Essays" republished from its pages became at once a standard work. The *Lays of Ancient Rome* sold like Scott's most popular poetry; the "History" caused an excitement almost unparalleled in literary annals. Not only was the first sale enormous, but it has gone on ever since increasing. The popular author was equally popular in Parliament. The benches were crammed to listen to the rare treat of his eloquence; and he had the far rarer glory of more than once turning the settled opinion of the House by a single speech. It is a more vulgar but a striking testimony to his success that he made 20,000*l.* in one year by literature. Other authors have had their heads turned by less triumphant careers; they have descended to lower ambition, and wasted their lives in spasmodic straining to gain worthless applause. Macaulay remained faithful to his calling. He worked his hardest to the last, and became a more unsparing critic of his own performances as time went on. We do not feel even a passing symptom of a grudge against his good fortune. Rather we are moved by that kind of sentiment which expresses itself in the schoolboy phrase, "well done our side." We are glad to see the hearty, kindly, truthful man crowned with all appropriate praise, and to think that for once one of our race has got so decidedly the best of it in the hard battle with the temptations and the miseries of life.

Certain shortcomings have been set off against these virtues by critics of Macaulay's life. He was, it has been said, too good a hater. At any rate he hated vice, meanness, and charlatanism. It is easier to hate such things too little than too much. But it must be admitted that his likes and dislikes indicate a certain rigidity and narrowness of nature. "In books, as in people and places," says Mr. Trevelyan, "he loved that, and loved that only, to which he had been accustomed from boyhood upwards." The faults of which this significant remark reveals one cause, are marked upon his whole literary character. Macaulay was converted to Whiggism when at college. The advance from Toryism to Whiggism is not such as to involve a very violent wrench of the moral and intellectual nature. Such as it was, it was the only wrench from which Macaulay suffered. What he was as a scholar of Trinity, he was substantially as a peer of the realm. He made, it would seem, few new friends, though he grappled his old ones as "with hooks of steel." The fault is one which belongs to many men of strong natures, and so long as we are considering Macaulay's

life we shall not be much disposed to quarrel with his innate conservatism. Strong affections are so admirable a quality that we can pardon the man who loves well though not widely; and if Macaulay had not a genuine fervour of regard for the little circle of his intimates, there is no man who deserves such praise.

It is when we turn from Macaulay's personal character to attempt an estimate of his literary position, that these faults acquire more importance. His intellectual force was extraordinary within certain limits; beyond those limits the giant became a child. He assimilated a certain set of ideas as a lad, and never acquired a new idea in later life. He accumulated vast stores of knowledge, but they all fitted into the old framework of theory. Whiggism seemed to him to provide a satisfactory solution for all political problems when he was sending his first article to *Knight's Magazine* and when he was writing the last page of his "History." "I entered public life a Whig," as he said in 1849, "and a Whig I am determined to remain." And what is meant by Whiggism in Macaulay's mouth? It means substantially that creed which registers the experience of the English upper classes during the four or five generations previous to Macaulay. It represents, not the reasoning, but the instinctive convictions generated by the dogged insistence upon their privileges of a stubborn, high-spirited, and individually short-sighted race. To deduce it as a symmetrical doctrine from abstract propositions would be futile. It is only reasonable so far as a creed, felt out by the collective instinct of a number of more or less stupid people, becomes impressed with a quasi-rational unity, not from their respect for logic, but from the uniformity of the mode of development. Hatred to pure reason is indeed one of its first principles. A doctrine avowedly founded on logic instead of instinct becomes for that very reason suspect to it. Common sense takes the place of philosophy. At times this mass of sentiment opposes itself under stress of circumstances to the absolute theories of monarchy and then calls itself Whiggism. At other times, it offers an equally dogged resistance to absolute theories of democracy, and then becomes nominally Tory. In Macaulay's youth, the weight of opinion had been slowly swinging round from the Toryism generated by dread of revolution, to Whiggism generated by the accumulation of palpable abuses. The growing intelligence and more rapidly growing power of the middle classes gave it at the same time a more popular character than before. Macaulay's "conversion" was simply a process of swinging with the tide. The Clapham Sect, amongst whom he had been brought up, was already more than half Whig, in virtue of its attack upon the sacred institution of slavery by means of popular agitation. Macaulay—the most brilliant of its young men—naturally cast in his lot with the brilliant men, a little older than himself, who fought under the blue and yellow banner of the *Edinburgh Review*. No great change of sentiment was necessary, though some of the old Clapham doctrines died out in his mind as he was swept into the political current.

Macaulay thus early became a thorough-going Whig. Whiggism seemed to him the *ne plus ultra* of progress: the pure essence of political wisdom. He was never fully conscious of the vast revolution in thought which was going on all around him. He was saturated with the doctrines of 1832. He stated them with unequalled vigour and clearness. Anybody who disputed them from either side of the question seemed to him to be little better than a fool. Southey and Mr. Gladstone talked arrant nonsense when they disputed the logical or practical value of the doctrines laid down by Locke. James Mill deserved the most contemptuous language for daring to push those doctrines beyond the sacred line. When Macaulay attacks an old Non-juror or a modern Tory, we can only wonder how opinions which, on his showing, are so inconceivably absurd, could ever have been held by any human being. Men are Whigs or not-Whigs, and the not-Whig is less a heretic to be anathematized than a blockhead beneath the reach of argument. All political wisdom centres in Holland House, and the *Edinburgh Review* is its prophet. There is something in the absolute confidence of Macaulay's political dogmatism which varies between the sublime and the ridiculous. We can hardly avoid laughing at this superlative self-satisfaction, and yet we must admit that it is indicative of a real political force not to be treated with simple contempt. Belief is power, even when belief is most unreasonable.

To define a Whig and to define Macaulay is pretty much the same thing. Let us trace some of the qualities which enabled one man to become so completely the type of a vast body of his compatriots.

The first and most obvious power in which Macaulay excelled his neighbours was his portentous memory. He could assimilate printed pages, says his nephew, more quickly than others could glance over them. Whatever he read was stamped upon his mind instantaneously and permanently, and he read everything. In the midst of severe labours in India, he read enough classical authors to stock the mind of an ordinary professor. At the same time he framed a criminal code and devoured masses of trashy novels. From the works of the ancient Fathers of the Church to English political pamphlets and to modern street ballads, no printed matter came amiss to his omnivorous appetite. All that he had read could be reproduced at a moment's notice. Every fool, he said, can repeat his Archbishops of Canterbury backwards; and he was as familiar with the Cambridge Calendar as the most devoted Protestant with the Bible. He could have re-written *Sir Charles Grandison* from memory if every copy had been lost. Now it might perhaps be plausibly maintained that the possession of such a memory is unfavourable to a high development of the reasoning powers. The case of Pascal, indeed, who is said never to have forgotten anything, shows that the two powers may co-exist: and other cases might of course be mentioned. But it is true that a powerful memory may enable a man to save himself the trouble of reasoning. It encourages the indolent propensity of deciding difficulties by precedent instead of principles. Macaulay, for example, was once required

to argue the point of political casuistry as to the degree of independent action permissible to members of a Cabinet. An ordinary mind would have to answer by striking a rough balance between the conveniences and inconveniences likely to arise. It would be forced, that is to say, to reason from the nature of the case. But Macaulay had at his fingers' end every instance from the days of Walpole to his own in which Ministers had been allowed to vote against the general policy of the Government. By quoting them, he seemed to decide the point by authority, instead of taking the troublesome and dangerous road of abstract reasoning. Thus to appeal to experience is with him to appeal to the stores of a gigantic memory; and is generally the same thing as to deny the value of all general rules. This is the true Whig doctrine of referring to precedent rather than to theory. Our popular leaders were always glad to quote Hampden and Sidney instead of venturing upon the dangerous ground of abstract rights.

Macaulay's love of deciding all points by an accumulation of appropriate instances is indeed characteristic of his mind. It is connected with a curious defect of analytical power. It appears in his literary criticism as much as in his political speculations. In an interesting letter to Mr. Napier, he states the case himself as an excuse for not writing upon Scott. "Hazlitt used to say, 'I am nothing if not critical.' The case with me," says Macaulay, "is precisely the reverse. I have a strong and acute enjoyment of works of the imagination, but I have never habituated myself to dissect them. Perhaps I enjoy them the more keenly for that very reason. Such books as Lessing's *Laocoon*, such passages as the criticism on *Hamlet* in *Wilhelm Meister*, fill me with wonder and despair." If we take any of Macaulay's criticisms, we shall see how truly he had gauged his own capacity. They are either random discharges of superlatives or vigorous assertions of sound moral principles. He compares Miss Austen to Shakspeare—one of the most random applications of the universal superlative ever made—or shows conclusively that Wycherley was a corrupt ribald. But he never makes a fine suggestion as to the secrets of the art whose products he admires or dislikes. His mode, for example, of criticising Bunyan is to give a list of the passages which he remembers, and, of course, he remembers everything. He observes, what was tolerably clear, that Bunyan's allegory is as vivid as a concrete history, though strangely comparing him in this respect to Shelley—the least concrete of poets; and he makes the discovery, which did not require his vast stores of historical knowledge, that "it is impossible to doubt that" Bunyan's trial of Christian and Faithful is meant to satirize the judges of Charles II. That is as plain as that the last cartoon in *Punch* is meant to satirize Mr. Disraeli. Macaulay can draw a most vivid portrait, so far as that can be done by a picturesque accumulation of characteristic facts, but he never gets below the surface or details the principles whose embodiment he describes from without.

The defect is connected with further peculiarities, in which Macaulay is the genuine representative of the true Whig type. The practical value

of adherence to precedent is obvious. It may be justified by the assertion that all sound political philosophy must be based upon experience: and I at least hold that assertion to contain a most important truth. But in Macaulay's mind this sound doctrine seems to be confused with the very questionable doctrine that in political questions there is no philosophy at all. To appeal to experience may mean either to appeal to facts so classified and organically arranged as to illustrate general truths, or to appeal to a mere mass of observations, without taking the trouble to elicit their true significance, or even to believe that they can be resolved into particular cases of a general truth. This is the difference between an experiential philosophy and a crude empiricism. Macaulay takes the lower alternative. The vigorous attack upon James Mill, which he very properly suppressed during his life on account of its juvenile arrogance, curiously illustrates his mode of thought. No one can deny, I think, that he makes some very good points against a very questionable system of political dogmatism. But when we ask what are Macaulay's own principles, we are left at a stand. He ought, by all his intellectual sympathies, to be a utilitarian. Yet he abuses utilitarianism with the utmost contempt, and has no alternative theory to suggest. He ends his first Essay against Mill by one of his customary purple patches about Baconian induction. He tells us, in the second, how to apply it. Bacon proposed so discover the principle of heat by observing in what qualities all hot bodies agreed, and in what qualities all cold bodies. Similarly we are to make a list of all constitutions which have produced good or bad government, and to investigate their points of agreement and difference. This sounds plausible to the uninstructed, but is a mere rhetorical flourish. Bacon's method is really inadequate, for reasons which I leave to men of science to explain, and Macaulay's method is equally hopeless in politics. It is hopeless for the simple reason that the complexity of the phenomena makes it impracticable. We cannot find out what constitution is best after this fashion, simply because the goodness or badness of a constitution depends upon a thousand conditions of social, moral, and intellectual development. When stripped of its pretentious phraseology, Macaulay's teaching comes simply to this: the only rule in politics is the rule of thumb. All general principles are wrong or futile. We have found out in England that our constitution, constructed in absolute defiance of all *à priori* reasoning, is the best in the world: it is the best for providing us with the maximum of bread, beef, beer, and means of buying bread, beer, and beef: and we have got it because we have never—like those publicans the French—trusted to fine sayings about truth and justice and human rights, but blundered on, adding a patch here and knocking a hole there, as our humour prompted us.

This sovereign contempt of all speculation—simply as speculation—reaches its acme in the Essay on Bacon. The curious naïveté with which Macaulay denounces all philosophy in that vigorous production excites a kind of perverse admiration. How can one refuse to admire the audacity

which enables a man explicitly to identify philosophy with humbug? It is what ninety-nine men out of a hundred think, but not one in a thousand dares to say. Goethe says somewhere that he likes Englishmen because English fools are the most thoroughgoing of fools. English "Philistines," as represented by Macaulay, the prince of Philistines, carry their contempt of the higher intellectual interests to a pitch of real sublimity. Bacon's theory of induction, says Macaulay, in so many words, was valueless. Everybody could reason before it as well as after. But Bacon really performed a service of inestimable value to mankind; and it consisted precisely in this, that he called their attention from philosophy to the pursuit of material advantages. The old philosophers had gone on bothering about theology, ethics, and the true and beautiful, and such other nonsense. Bacon taught us to work at chemistry and mechanics, to invent diving-bells and steam-engines and spinning-jennies. We could never, it seems, have found out the advantages of this direction of our energies without a philosopher, and so far philosophy is negatively good. It has written up upon all the supposed avenues to inquiry, "No admission except on business;" that is, upon the business of direct practical discovery. We English have taken the hint, and we have therefore lived to see when a man can breakfast in London and dine in Edinburgh, and may look forward to a day when the tops of Ben-Nevis and Helvellyn will be cultivated like flower-gardens, and machines constructed on principles yet to be discovered will be in every house.

The theory which underlies this conclusion is often explicitly stated. All philosophy has produced mere futile logomachy. Greek sages and Roman moralists, and mediæval schoolmen, have amassed words and amassed nothing else. One distinct discovery of a solid truth, however humble, is worth all their labours. This condemnation applies not only to philosophy, but to the religious embodiment of philosophy. No satisfactory conclusion ever has been reached or ever will be reached in theological disputes. On all such topics, he tells Mr. Gladstone, there has always been the widest divergence of opinion. Nor are there better hopes for the future. The ablest minds, he says, in the Essay upon Ranke, have believed in transubstantiation, that is, according to him, in the most ineffable nonsense. There is no certainty that men will not believe to the end of time the doctrines which imposed upon so able a man as Sir Thomas More. Not only, that is, have men been hitherto wandering in a labyrinth without a clue, but there is no chance that any clue will ever be found. The doctrine, so familiar to our generation, of laws of intellectual development, never even occurs to him. The collective thought of generations marks time without advancing. A guess of Sir Thomas More is as good or as bad as the guess of the last philosopher. This theory, if true, implies utter scepticism. And yet Macaulay was clearly not a sceptic. His creed was hidden under a systematic reticence, and he resisted every attempt to raise the veil with rather superfluous indignation. When a constituent dared to ask about his religious views, he

denounced the rash inquirer in terms applicable to an agent of the inquisition. He vouchsafed, indeed, the information that he was a Christian. We may accept the phrase, not only on the strength of his invariable sincerity, but because it falls in with the general turn of his arguments. He denounces the futility of the ancient moralists, but he asserts the enormous social value of Christianity.

His attitude, in fact, is equally characteristic of the man and his surroundings. The old Clapham teaching had faded in his mind; it had not produced a revolt. He retained the old hatred for slavery; and he retained, with the whole force of his affectionate nature, a reverence for the school of Wilberforce, Thornton, and his own father. He estimated most highly, not perhaps more highly than they deserved, the value of the services rendered by them in awakening the conscience of the nation. In their persistent and disinterested labours he recognized a manifestation of the great social force of Christianity. But a belief that Christianity is useful, and even that it is true, may consist with a profound conviction of the futility of the philosophy with which it has been associated. Here again Macaulay is a true Whig. The Whig love of precedent, the Whig hatred for abstract theories, may consist with a Tory application. But the true Whig differed from the Tory in adding to these views an invincible suspicion of parsons. The first Whig battles were fought against the Church as much as against the King. From the struggle with Sacheverel down to the struggle for Catholic emancipation, Toryism and High-Church principles were associated against Whigs and Dissenters. By that kind of dumb instinct which outruns reason, the Whig had learnt that there was some occult bond of union between the claims of a priesthood and the claims of a monarchy. The old maxim, "No bishop, no king," suggested the opposite principle, that you must keep down the clergy if you would limit the monarchy. The natural interpretation of this prejudice into political theory, is that the Church is extremely useful as an ally of the constable, but possesses a most dangerous explosive power if allowed to claim independent authority. In practice we must resist all claims of the Church to dictate to the State. In theory, we must deny the foundation upon which such claims can alone be founded. Dogmatism must be pronounced to be fundamentally irrational. Nobody knows anything about theology, or, what is the same thing, no two people agree. As they don't agree, they cannot claim to impose their beliefs upon others.

This sentiment comes out curiously in the characteristic Essay just mentioned. Macaulay says, in reply to Mr. Gladstone, that there is no more reason for the introduction of religious questions into State affairs than for introducing them into the affairs of a Canal Company. He puts his argument with an admirable vigour and clearness which blinds many readers to the fact that he is begging the question by evading the real difficulty. If, in fact, Government had as little to do as a Canal Company with religious opinion, we should have long ago learnt

the great lesson of toleration. But that is just the very *crux*. Can we draw the line between the spiritual and the secular? Nothing, replies Macaulay, is easier; and his method has been already indicated. We all agree that we don't want to be robbed or murdered: we are by no means all agreed about the doctrine of Trinity. But, says a churchman, a certain creed is necessary to men's moral and spiritual welfare, and therefore of the utmost importance even for the prevention of robbery and murder. This is what Macaulay implicitly denies. The whole of dogmatic theology belongs to that region of philosophy, metaphysics, or whatever you please to call it, in which men are doomed to dispute for ever without coming any nearer to a decision. All that the statesman has to do with such matters is to see that if men are fools enough to speculate, they shall not be allowed to cut each other's throats when they reach, as they always must reach, contradictory results. If you raise a difficult point, such, for example, as the education question, Macaulay replies, as so many people have said before and since, Teach the people "those principles of morality which are common to all the forms of Christianity." That is easier said than done! The plausibility of the solution in Macaulay's mouth is due to the fundamental assumption that everything except morality is hopeless ground of inquiry. Once get beyond the Ten Commandments and you will sink in a bottomless morass of argument, counter-argument, quibble, logomachy, superstition, and confusion worse confounded.

In Macaulay's teaching, as in that of his party, there is doubtless much that is noble. He has a righteous hatred of oppression in all shapes and disguises. He can tear to pieces with great logical power many of the fallacies alleged by his opponents. Our sympathies are certainly with him as against men who advocate persecution on any grounds, and he is fully qualified to crush his ordinary opponents. But it is plain that his whole political and (if we may use the word) philosophical teaching rests on something like a downright aversion to the higher order of speculation. He despises it. He wants something tangible and concrete—something in favour of which he may appeal to the immediate testimony of the senses. He must feel his feet planted on the solid earth. The pain of attempting to soar into higher regions is not compensated to him by the increased width of horizon. And in this respect he is but the type of most of his countrymen, and reflects what has been (as I should say) erroneously called their "unimaginative" view of things in general.

Macaulay, at any rate, distinctly belongs to the imaginative class of minds, if only in virtue of his instinctive preference of the concrete to the abstract, and his dislike, already noticed, to analysis. He has a thirst for distinct and vivid images. He reasons by examples instead of appealing to formulæ. There is a characteristic account in Mr. Trevelyan's volumes of his habit of rambling amongst the older parts of London, his fancy teeming with stories attached to the picturesque fragments of

antiquity, and carrying on dialogues between imaginary persons as vivid, if not as forcible, as those of Scott's novels. To this habit—rather inverting the order of cause and effect—he attributes his accuracy of detail. We would rather say that the intensity of the impressions generates both the accuracy and the day-dreams. A philosopher would be arguing in his daily rambles where an imaginative mind is creating a series of pictures. But Macaulay's imagination is as definitely limited as his speculation. The genuine poet is also a philosopher. He sees intuitively what the reasoner evolves by argument. The greatest minds in both classes are equally marked by their naturalisation in the lofty regions of thought, inaccessible or uncongenial to men of inferior stamp. It is tempting in some ways to compare Macaulay to Burke. Burke's superiority is marked by this, that he is primarily a philosopher, and therefore instinctively sees the illustration of a general law in every particular fact. Macaulay, on the contrary, gets away from theory as fast as possible, and tries to conceal his poverty of thought under masses of ingenious illustration.

His imaginative narrowness would come out still more clearly by a comparison with Mr. Carlyle. One significant fact must be enough. Every one must have observed how powerfully Mr. Carlyle expresses the emotion suggested by the brief appearance of some little waif from past history. We may remember, for example, how the usher, De Brézé, appears for a moment to utter the last shriek of the old monarchical etiquette, and then vanishes into the dim abysses of the past. The imagination is excited by the little glimpse of light flashing for a moment upon some special point in the cloudy phantasmagoria of human history. The image of a past existence is projected for a moment upon our eyes, to make us feel how transitory is life, and how rapidly one visionary existence expels another. We are such stuff as dreams are made of:—

None other than a moving row
Of visionary shapes that come and go
Around the sun-illuminated lantern held
In midnight by the master of the show,

Every object is seen against the background of eternal mystery. In Macaulay's pages this element is altogether absent. We see a figure from the past as vividly as if he were present. We observe the details of his dress, the odd oaths with which his discourse is interlarded, the minute peculiarities of his features or manner. We laugh or admire as we should do at a living man; and we rightly admire the force of the illusion. But the thought never suggests itself that we too are passing into oblivion, that our little island of daylight will soon be shrouded in the gathering mist, and that we tread at every instant on the dust of forgotten continents. We treat the men of past ages quite at our ease. We applaud and criticise Hampden or Chatham as we should applaud Peel or Cobden. There is no atmospheric effect—no sense of the dim march of ages, or of the vast procession of human life. It is doubtless a

great feat to make the past present. It is a greater to emancipate us from the tyranny of the present, and to raise us to a point at which we feel that we too are almost as dreamlike as the men of old time. To gain clearness and definition Macaulay has dropped the element of mystery. He sees perfectly whatever can be seen by the ordinary lawyer, or politician, or merchant; he is insensible to the visions which reveal themselves only to minds haunted by thoughts of eternity, and delighting, with Sir Thomas Browne, to lose themselves in an *O altitudo*. Mysticism is to him hateful, and historical figures form groups of individuals, not symbols of forces working behind the veil.

Macaulay, therefore, can be no more a poet in the sense in which the word is applied to Spencer, or to Wordsworth, both of whom he holds to be simply intolerable bores, than he can be a metaphysician or a scientific thinker. In common phraseology, he is a Philistine—a word which I understand properly to denote indifference to the higher intellectual interests. The word may also be defined, however, as the name applied by pigs to the rest of their species. And I venture to hold that the modern fashion of using it as a common term of abuse is doing real mischief. It enables intellectual coxcombs to brand men with an offensive epithet for being a degree more manly than themselves. There is much that is good in your Philistine, and when we ask what Macaulay was, instead of showing what he was not, we shall perhaps find that the popular estimate is not altogether wrong.

Macaulay was not only a typical Whig, but the prophet of Whiggism to his generation. Though not a poet or a philosopher, he was a born rhetorician. His parliamentary career proves his capacity sufficiently, though want of the physical qualifications, and of exclusive devotion to political success, prevented him, as perhaps a want of subtlety or flexibility of mind would have always prevented him, from attaining excellence as a debater. In everything that he wrote, however, we see the true rhetorician. He tells us that Fox wrote debates, whilst Mackintosh spoke essays. Macaulay did both. His compositions are a series of orations on behalf of sound Whig views, whatever their external form. Given a certain audience—and an orator supposes a particular audience—their effectiveness is undeniable. Macaulay's may be composed of ordinary Englishmen, with a moderate standard of education. His arguments are adapted to the ordinary Cabinet Minister, or, we may say, to the person who is willing to pay a shilling to hear an evening lecture. He can hit an audience composed of such materials—to quote Burke's phrase about George Grenville—"between wind and water." He uses the language, the logic, and the images which they can fully understand; and though his hearer, like his schoolboy, is ostensibly credited at times with a portentous memory, Macaulay always takes excellent care to put him in mind of the facts which he is assumed to remember. The faults and the merits of his style follow from his resolute determination to be understood of the people. He was specially delighted, as his nephew tells us, by

a reader at Messrs. Spottiswoode's, who said that in all the "History" there was only one sentence the meaning of which was not obvious to him at first sight. We are more surprised that there was one such sentence. Clearness is the first of the cardinal virtues of style; and nobody ever wrote more clearly than Macaulay. He sacrifices much, it is true, in order to obtain it. He proves that two and two make four, with a pertinacity which would make him dull, if it were not for his abundance of brilliant illustration. He always remembers the principle which should guide a barrister in addressing a jury. He has not merely to exhibit his proofs, but to hammer them into the heads of his audience by incessant repetition. It is no small proof of artistic skill that a writer who systematically adopts this method should yet be invariably lively. He goes on blacking the chimney with a persistency which somehow amuses us because he puts so much heart into his work. He proves the most obvious truths again and again; but his vivacity never flags. This tendency undoubtedly leads to great defects of style. His sentences are monotonous and mechanical. He has a perfect hatred of pronouns, and for fear of a possible entanglement between "hims" and "hers" and "its," he will repeat not merely a substantive, but a whole group of substantives. Sometimes, to make his sense unmistakable, he will repeat a whole formula, with only a change in the copula. For the same reason, he hates all qualifications and parentheses. Each thought must be resolved into its constituent parts; each argument must be expressed as a simple proposition; and his paragraphs are rather aggregates of independent atoms than possessed of an organic unity. His writing—to use a favourite formula of his own—bears the same relation to a style of graceful modulation that a bit of mosaic work bears to a picture. Each phrase has its distinct hue, instead of melting into its neighbours. Here we have a black patch and there a white. There are no half tones, no subtle interblending of different currents of thought. It is partly for this reason that his descriptions of character are often so unsatisfactory. He likes to represent a man as a bundle of contradictions, because it enables him to obtain startling contrasts. He heightens a vice in one place, a virtue in another, and piles them together in a heap, without troubling himself to ask whether nature can make such monsters, or preserve them if made. To any one given to analysis, these contrasts are actually painful. There is a story of the Duke of Wellington having once stated that the rats got into his bottles in Spain. "They must have been very large bottles or very small rats," said somebody. "On the contrary," replied the Duke, "the rats were very large and the bottles very small." Macaulay delights in leaving us face to face with such contrasts in more important matters. Boswell must, we would say, have been a clever man or his biography cannot have been so good as you say. On the contrary, says Macaulay, he was the greatest of fools and the best of biographers. He strikes a discord and purposely fails to resolve it. To men of more delicate sensibility the result is an intolerable jar.

For the same reason, Macaulay's genuine eloquence is marred by the symptoms of malice prepense. When he sows on a purple patch, he is resolved that there shall be no mistake about it; it must stand out from a radical contrast of colours. The emotion is not to swell by degrees, till you find yourself carried away in the torrent which set out as a tranquil stream. The transition is deliberately emphasized. On one side of a full stop you are listening to a matter-of-fact statement; on the other, there is all at once a blare of trumpets and a beating of drums, till the crash almost deafens you. He regrets in one of his letters that he has used up the celebrated, and, it must be confessed, really forcible passage about the impeachment scene in Westminster Hall. It might have come in usefully in the "History," which, as he then hoped, might come down to Warren Hastings. The regret is unpleasantly suggestive of that deliberation in the manufacture of eloquence which stamps it as artificial.

Such faults may annoy critics, even of no very sensitive fibre. What is it that redeems them? The first answer is, that the work is impressive because it is thoroughly genuine. The stream, it is true, comes forth by spasmodic gushes, when it ought to flow in a continuous current; but it flows from a full reservoir instead of being pumped from a shallow cistern. The knowledge and, what is more, the thoroughly assimilated knowledge, is enormous. Mr. Trevelyan has shown in detail what we had all divined for ourselves, how much patient labour is often employed in a paragraph or the turn of a phrase. To accuse Macaulay of superficiality is, in this sense, altogether absurd. His speculation may be meagre, but his store of information is simply inexhaustible. Mr. Mill's writing was impressive, because one often felt that a single argument condensed the result of a long process of reflection. Macaulay has the lower but similar merit that a single picturesque touch implies incalculable masses of knowledge. It is but an insignificant part of the building which appears above ground. Compare a passage with the assigned authority, and you are inclined to accuse him—sometimes it may be rightfully—of amplifying and modifying. But more often the particular authority is merely the nucleus round which a whole volume of other knowledge has crystallised. A single hint is significant to a properly prepared mind of a thousand facts not explicitly contained in it. Nobody, he said, could judge of the accuracy of one part of his "History" who had not "soaked his mind with the transitory literature of the day." His real authority was not this or that particular passage, but a literature. And for this reason alone, Macaulay's historical writings have a permanent value which will prevent them from being superseded even by more philosophical thinkers, whose minds have not undergone the "soaking" process.

It is significant again that imitations of Macaulay are almost as offensive as imitations of Carlyle. Every great writer has his parasites. Macaulay's false glitter and jingle, his frequent flippancy and superficiality of thought are more easily caught than his virtues; but so are all faults. Would-be followers of Mr. Carlyle catch the strained gestures, without

the rapture of his inspiration. Would-be followers of Mr. Mill fancied themselves to be logical when they were only hopelessly unsympathetic and unimaginative; and would-be followers of some other writers can be effeminate and foppish without being subtle or graceful. Macaulay's thoroughness of work has, perhaps, been less contagious than we could wish. Something of the modern raising of the standard of accuracy in historical inquiry may be set down to his influence. The misfortune is that, if some writers have learnt from him to be flippant without learning to be laborious, others have caught the accuracy without the liveliness. In the later volumes of his "History," his vigour began to be a little clogged by the fulness of his knowledge; and we can observe symptoms of the tendency of modern historians to grudge the sacrifice of sifting their knowledge. They read enough, but instead of giving us the results, they tumble out the accumulated mass of raw materials upon our devoted heads, till they suggest the wish for a fire in the State Paper Office.

Fortunately, Macaulay did not yield to this temptation in his earlier writings, and the result is that he is, for the ordinary reader, one of the two authorities for English history, the other being Shakspeare. Without comparing their merits, we must admit that the compression of so much into a few short narratives shows intensity as well as compass of mind. He could digest as well as devour, and he tried his digestion pretty severely. It is fashionable to say that part of his practical force is due to the training of parliamentary life. Familiarity with the course of affairs doubtless strengthened his insight into history, and taught him the value of downright common sense in teaching an average audience. Speaking purely from the literary point of view, I cannot agree further in the opinion suggested. I suspect the "History" would have been better if Macaulay had not been so deeply immersed in all the business of legislation and electioneering. I do not profoundly reverence the House of Commons tone—even in the House of Commons; and in literature it easily becomes a nuisance. Familiarity with the actual machinery of politics tends to strengthen the contempt for general principles, of which Macaulay had an ample share. It encourages the illusion of the fly upon the wheel, the doctrine that the dust and din of debate and the worry of lobbies and committee-rooms is not the effect but the cause of the great social movement. The historian of the Roman Empire, as we know, owed something to the captain of Hampshire Militia; but years of life absorbed in parliamentary wrangling and in sitting at the feet of the philosophers of Holland House were not likely to widen a mind already disposed to narrow views of the world.

For Macaulay's immediate success, indeed, the training was undoubtedly valuable. As he carried into Parliament the authority of a great writer, so he wrote books with the authority of the practical politician. He has the true instinct of affairs. He knows what are the

immediate motives which move masses of men ; and is never misled by fanciful analogies or blindfolded by the pedantry of official language. He has seen flesh-and-blood statesmen—at any rate, English statesmen—and understands the nature of the animal. Nobody can be freer from the dominion of crotchets. All his reasoning is made of the soundest common sense and represents, if not the ultimate forces, yet forces with which we have to reckon. And he knows, too, how to stir the blood of the average Englishman. He understands most thoroughly the value of concentration, unity, and simplicity. Every speech or essay forms an organic whole, in which some distinct moral is vigorously driven home by a succession of downright blows. This strong rhetorical instinct is shown conspicuously in the *Lays of Ancient Rome*, which, whatever we might say of them as poetry, are an admirable specimen of rhymed rhetoric. We know how good they are when we see how incapable are modern ballad-writers in general of putting the same swing and fire into their verses. Compare, for example, Aytoun's *Lays of the Cavaliers*, as the most obvious parallel :—

Not swifter pours the avalanche
Adown the steep incline,
That rises o'er the parent springs
Of rough and rapid Rhine,

than certain Scotch heroes over an entrenchment. Place this mouthful by any parallel passage in Macaulay :—

Now, by our sire Quirinus,
It was a goodly sight
To see the thirty standards
Swept down the tide of flight,
So flies the spray in Adria
When the black squall doth blow,
So cornsheaves in the flood time
Spin down the whirling Po.

And so on in verses, which innumerable schoolboys of inferior pretensions to Macaulay's know by heart. And in such cases the verdict of the schoolboy is perhaps more valuable than that of the literary connoisseur. There are, of course, many living poets who can do tolerably something of far higher quality which Macaulay could not do at all. But I don't know who, since Scott, could have done this particular thing. Possibly Mr. Kingsley might have approached it, or the poet, if he would have condescended so far, who sang the bearing of the good news from Ghent to Aix. In any case, the feat is significant of Macaulay's true power. It looks easy ; it involves no demands upon the higher reasoning or imaginative powers : but nobody will believe it to be easy who observes the extreme rarity of a success in a feat so often attempted.

A similar remark is suggested by Macaulay's "Essays." Read such an Essay as those upon Clive, or Warren Hastings, or Chatham. The story seems to tell itself. The characters are so strongly marked, the events fall so easily into their places, that we fancy that the narrator's

business has been done to his hand. It wants little critical experience to discover that this massive simplicity is really indicative of an art not, it may be, of the highest order, but truly admirable for its purpose. It indicates not only a gigantic memory, but a glowing mind, which has fused a crude mass of materials into unity. If we do not find the sudden touches which reveal the philosophical sagacity or the imaginative insight of the highest order of intellects, we recognize the true rhetorical instinct. The outlines may be harsh, and the colours too glaring; but the general effect has been carefully studied. The details are wrought in with consummate skill. We indulge in an intercalary pish! here and there; but we are fascinated and we remember. The actual amount of intellectual force which goes to the composition of such written archives is immense, though the quality may have something to be desired. Shrewd common sense may be an inferior substitute for philosophy, and the faculty which brings remote objects close to the eye of an ordinary observer for the loftier faculty which tinges everyday life with the hues of mystic contemplation. But when the common faculties are present in so abnormal a degree, they begin to have a dignity of their own.

It is impossible in such matters to establish any measure of comparison. No analysis will enable us to say how much pedestrian capacity may be fairly regarded as equivalent to a small capacity for soaring above the solid earth, and therefore the question as to the relative value of Macaulay's work and that of some men of loftier aims and less perfect execution must be left to individual taste. We can only say that it is something so to have written the history of many national heroes as to make their faded glories revive to active life in the memory of their countrymen. So long as Englishmen are what they are—and they don't seem to change as rapidly as might be wished—they will turn to Macaulay's pages to gain a vivid impression of our greatest achievements during an important period.

Nor is this all. The fire which glows in Macaulay's history, the intense patriotic feeling, the love of certain moral qualities, is not altogether of the highest kind. His ideal of national and individual greatness might easily be criticised. But the sentiment, as far as it goes, is altogether sound and manly. He is too fond, it has been said, of incessant moralising. From a scientific point of view the moralising is irrelevant. We want to study the causes and the nature of great social movements; and when we are stopped in order to inquire how far the prominent actors in them were hurried beyond ordinary rules, we are transported into a different order of thought. It would be as much to the purpose if we reproved an earthquake for upsetting a fort, and blamed it for moving the foundations of a church. Macaulay can never understand this point of view. With him, history is nothing more than a sum of biographies. And even from a biographical point of view his moralising is often troublesome. He not only insists upon transporting party prejudice into his estimates, and mauls poor James II. as he

mauled the Tories in 1832; but he applies obviously inadequate tests. It is absurd to call upon men engaged in a life-and-death wrestle to pay scrupulous attention to the ordinary rules of politeness. There are times when judgments guided by constitutional precedent become ludicrously out of place, and when the best man is he who aims straightest at the heart of his antagonist. But, in spite of such drawbacks, Macaulay's genuine sympathy for manliness and force of character generally enables him to strike pretty nearly the true note. To learn the true secret of Cromwell's character, we must go to Mr. Carlyle, who can sympathise with deep currents of religious enthusiasm. Macaulay retains too much of the old Whig distrust for all that it calls fanaticism fully to recognize the grandeur beneath the grotesque outside of the Puritan. But Macaulay tells us most distinctly why Englishmen warm at the name of the great Protector. We, like the banished cavaliers, "glow with an emotion of national pride" at his animated picture of the unconquerable Ironsides. One phrase may be sufficiently illustrative. After quoting Clarendon's story of the Scotch nobleman who forced Charles to leave the field of Naseby, by seizing his horse's bridle, "no man," says Macaulay, "who had much value for his life, would have tried to perform the same friendly office on that day for Oliver Cromwell."

Macaulay, in short, always feels, and, therefore, communicates, a hearty admiration for sheer manliness. And some of his portraits of great men have therefore a genuine power, and show the deeper insight which comes from true sympathy. He estimates the respectable observer of constitutional proprieties too highly; he is unduly repelled by the external oddities of the truly masculine and noble Johnson; but his enthusiasm for his pet hero, William, or for Chatham or Clive, carries us along with him. And at moments when he is narrating their exploits, and can forget his elaborate argumentations and refrain from bits of deliberate bombast, the style becomes graphic in the higher sense of a much-abused word, and we confess that we are listening to genuine eloquence. Putting aside for the moment recollection of foibles, almost too obvious to deserve the careful demonstration which they have sometimes received, we are glad to surrender ourselves to the charm of his straightforward, clear-headed, hard-hitting declamation. There is no writer with whom it is easier to find fault, or the limits of whose power may be more distinctly defined; but within his own sphere he goes forward, as he went through life, with a kind of grand confidence in himself and his cause, which is attractive and at times even provocative of sympathetic enthusiasm.

Macaulay said, in his Diary, that he wrote his "History" with an eye to a remote past and a remote future. He meant to erect a monument more enduring than brass, and the ambition at least stimulated him to admirable thoroughness of workmanship. How far his aim was secured must be left to the decision of a posterity, which will not trouble itself about the susceptibilities of candidates for its favour. In one sense, however, Macaulay must be interesting so long as the type which he so fully repre-

sents continues to exist. Whig has become an old-fashioned phrase, and is repudiated by modern Liberals and Radicals, who think themselves wiser than their fathers. The decay of the old name implies a remarkable political change; but I doubt whether it implies more than a very superficial change in the national character. New classes and new ideas have come upon the stage; but they have a curious family likeness to the old. The Whiggism, whose peculiarities Macaulay reflected so faithfully, represents some of the most deeply-seated tendencies of the national character. It has, therefore, both its ugly and its honourable side. Its disregard, or rather its hatred, for pure reason, its exaltation of expediency above truth and precedent above principle, its instinctive dread of strong religious or political faiths, are of course questionable qualities. Yet even they have their nobler side. There is something almost sublime about the grand unreasonableness of the average Englishman. His dogged contempt for all foreigners and philosophers, his intense resolution to have his own way and use his own eyes, to see nothing that does not come within his narrow sphere of vision, and to see it quite clearly before he acts upon it, are of course abhorrent to thinkers of a different order. But they are great qualities in the struggle for existence, which must determine the future of the world. The Englishman, armed in his panoply of self-content, and grasping facts with unequalled tenacity, goes on trampling upon acuter sensibilities, but somehow shouldering his way successfully through the troubles of the universe. Strength may be combined with stupidity, but even then it is not to be trifled with. Macaulay's sympathy with these qualities led to some annoying peculiarities, to a certain brutal insularity, and to a commonness, sometimes a vulgarity of style which is easily criticised. But, at least, we must confess that, to use an epithet which always comes up in speaking of him, he is a thoroughly manly writer. There is nothing silly or finical about him. He sticks to his colours resolutely and honourably. If he flatters his countrymen, it is the unconscious and spontaneous effect of his participation in their weaknesses. He never knowingly calls black white, or panders to an ungenerous sentiment. He is combative to a fault, but his combativeness is allied to a genuine love of fair play. When he hates a man, he calls him knave or fool with unflinching frankness, but he never uses a base weapon. The wounds which he inflicts may hurt, but they do not fester. His patriotism may be narrow, but it implies faith in the really good qualities, the manliness, the spirit of justice, and the strong moral sense of his countrymen. He is proud of the healthy vigorous stock from which he springs, and the fervour of his enthusiasm, though it may shock a delicate taste, has embodied itself in writings which will long continue to be the typical illustration of qualities of which we are all proud at bottom—indeed, be it said in passing, a good deal too proud.

Spelling.

In one of the early numbers of this Magazine—in Hogarth's Biography, if the writer be not mistaken—some severe remarks were made touching the orthography of the conqueror at Ramillies and Oudenarde; nor indeed was that of his Duchess allowed to escape uncensured. Very derogatory were these remarks to the brave warrior and his generous wife, but unfortunately also very true. It must not, however, be supposed that these sinners were sinners above all those of their own time, or before and after them, that they suffered such things from the able writer of that article. The tower of Siloam which fell on them might also have fallen on many more that once upon a time dwelt in merry England. In the reign of Henry V. good spelling and clean shirts were equally rare luxuries. Leicester, says Disraeli, spelt his own name in eight different methods, while the family appellation of Villers, in deeds and documents relating to the house, is spelt in at least a dozen. Mainwaring passed through 131 orthographical permutations, and is even now, if spelling have aught to do with pronunciation, spelt incorrectly at last. The immortal bard himself, not to speak of what others did for him, changed his own mind some thirty times, according to Halliwell, as to the letters and the sequence of the letters composing his illustrious patronymic. Elizabeth wrote sovereign in as many ways as she knew languages—that is, seven. The young Pretender, following his own sweet will, and entirely free from any servile bondage to the letter, writes of his father as a certain Jems or Gems. In those palmy days, when every man was his own speller, when military examinations were not, little astonishment would have been raised by such arbitrary orthography as lately adorned the paper of a candidate for one of her Majesty's appointments in the line. That candidate spelt elegy *leg*, and ingeniously evolved *pashsh-inger* out of passenger. Much ingenuity, nay imagination, inspired another, who framed *Indian ears* out of engineers. But what are such trifling irregularities as these to the caprice of—say, her Grace the Duchess of Norfolk? The Duchess of Norfolk was one of the most accomplished ladies of the sixteenth century, the friend of scholars, the patron of literature. She wrote to Cromwell, Earl of Essex, thus:—"My fary gode lord—her I sand you in tokyn hoff the neweyer a glasse hoff Setyl set in Selfer gyld. I pra you tak hit An hy wer habel het shoulde be bater," &c. The patron of literature has ingeniously contrived to spell *I* and *it* each in two different ways in as many lines. What this friend of scholars intended the Earl to understand by Setyl is very obscure. There is a Scotch word something like it signifying "a disease affecting

sheep in the side," but this the most accomplished lady can scarcely have meant. Nor was French spelling much better than English in the olden time. Royal letters of the last century are distinguished by such heterodox combinations as *J'avoient* and *J'étè*. Indeed good spelling seems to have formerly been considered a vulgarity, mere yeoman's service. "Base," might many a Louis have said, parodying the ancient Pistol—"base is the soul that spells." So in effect said Will Honeycomb, when some errors were detected in the letters which he writ in his youth to a coquette lady. He never liked pedantry in spelling, and spelt like a gentleman and not like a scholar. So probably did all the ladies, the Picts, Idols, and Blanks of the society of his time. Sunday superfine spelling was left to servants and scholars and such low folk, or consigned by power of attorney to the compositor's care. The whole of the ancient world seems to have suffered from heresy and schism, and heterography was universal. Spelling primers were not, or their occupation was gone. A dive into old books and papers, but especially papers, is a dive into a chaos as dark and full of confusion as that which, if Milton be believed, was disagreeable to the devil (which, says Johnson, were more properly written *divil*) himself.

The wide tract of literary common in which early writers generally expatiated was considerably closed in by the composing stick. But even the press seems sometimes to have added errors rather than taken them away. Chaucer, as well as the poet of the "Ormolum," has left on record his solicitude about the correct spelling of his works, yet we find the same word printed in half a dozen different ways on the same page. Notoriously too the printers adjusted their orthography only too often by no higher or more scientific consideration than the length of their lines. The Orientals are wont to lengthen a final letter, to avoid an unseemly hiatus at the end of a line, and our early printers were licentious enough to add or take away letters for the same purpose. Printed English literature became a garden of lopped and grafted growths; exogens and endogens flourished there in abundance. The printer's galley was a Procrustean bed for most of the unhappy words that were fated to fall therein. So in the New Testament translated by the talented Tyndale we have it—one poor little word tortured in seven ways—spelt *itt*, *yt*, *ytt*, *hit*, *hitt*, *hyt*, and *hytt*. This, indeed, may be owing to the love of change in Tyndale himself; but it seems evident that in the edition of our holy Bible, published in 1611, *hot* is also printed *whot*, *hote*, *ye yee*, *hadst* *haddest*, with a thousand similar variations, for no other reason than that which induced a compositor to set up master-piece as *Mr. Piece*—convenience of spacing. Poetry is found to be usually more correct, as there was less need for this device. The press played with words as the antiquated devices of poetic altars, eggs, wings, and axes, those combinations of caprice and industry, played with good sense. The confusion of J and I in the edition of 1611, as *Iesus* for *Jesus*, and of u and v as *euery* (every) and *vnto* (unto), together with a capri-

cious use of capitals, are not strictly variations of spelling, but they lend a weird appearance to the text.

The normal changes which English orthography has undergone, as opposed to these, resulting from the licence of printers and the humour of private individuals, are not so many as might be well imagined. The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer appears in Alfred's Anglo-Saxon *Ac alyse us of yfte* in the 12th century, *ac alys fram yfele* in the 14th century, in Wyclif's version *But delyvere us from yvel*, and in the Authorized Version of 1600 as we now write it. The Bible has indeed been a great conservative power in the domain of English orthography.

Dictionaries restrained in their turn the vagaries of printers, and comparative order rose out of chaos. But even dictionaries, though they arrested, could not nor can retard evolution. Spelling changes continually, like life or a river. A living language never becomes petrified—*omnia mutantur*. Cotgrave's Dictionary, which was published in 1650, contains spellings now comparatively rare. *Abbesse, abhominable, abisme, abricot, accademie, accrew, accroch, accoast*, with many more, may be found in the first two pages, old coins more than once called in, melted down and reissued before they assumed their present form. It may perhaps be fairly said that about half the words spelt as Cotgrave spelt them a little over two centuries back, are now spelt differently, or altogether dropt out of our language, long dead and forgotten. More than half of his definition of "coquette" is for this reason unintelligible. But his words evidently convey reproach, and seem to proceed from the mouth of one who has suffered. A coquette, says Cotgrave, is a *fisking or slipperous minx, a cocket, a titisill, a flebergebit*.

Only a hundred years elapsed between Cotgrave and Johnson, but in these years how great a change! Johnson's Dictionary is indeed, owing probably mainly to the printing press, far nearer in its spelling to our present fashion than Cotgrave's spelling was to that of Johnson. Nearer still would it have been were it not for some of the Doctor's eccentricities. Music, physic, were before Johnson's time spelt without a final k. The word was at first *musicke*, then *musick*, then music. Johnson objected to the apocope of the k—for that of the e he seems to have little cared, though he affectionately preserved this letter in *malecontent* and *maleadministration*—and returned to the old form, though he ventured not to write *musickal* or *acatalectick*. "Sir," might the good doctor have said, addressing some stickler for music, "Where shall we conclude? Shall we for the convenience of the idle and the expedition of the ignorant curtail our verbal inheritance of its prescribed proportions? Shall we humorously unsettle the orthography of our fathers, and teach our children to write *Dic gave Jac a kic and a knoc on the bac with a thic stic?*" Custom, however, the ultimate arbitress of orthography, has disdained to take that one ewe lamb from the poor: she has left the k to these monosyllables though she has ruthlessly robbed their richer congeners.

It was the desire of this lexicographer to regulate confusion and disentangle perplexity. Therefore he presents us with *ambassadour* but sculptor, *anteriour* but posterior, *interiour* but exterior, *horroure* but stupor. These -ours and -ors are to the present day bones of contention. More will be said of them hereafter. At present it may be presumed that as all or most of this class of words are derived from the Latin through the French, the same fashion of spelling should be adopted throughout, did not custom say us nay; and it would be better perhaps to write honour, but honorable, as entire but inquire. Dr. Johnson professed to expunge inconsistencies and absurdities, and so we have *moveable* but immovable; *reconcilable*, *tameable*, *saleable*, lose the e in compounds; *chastely* but chastness, *blustrous* but boisterous, *aberruncate* but averruncate, *amasment* but embarrassment, *dissolvable* but indissolvable, *chilifactory* but chyle, *sackcloth* but haircloth, *hemistick* but distich, *parsnep* but turnip, *bias* but unbiass, *docil* but indocile, *miscal* but recall, *waterfal* but snowball, *dunghil* but molehill, *downhil* but uphill. Again, we have *lodgement*, in which, says Walker, rectitude of habit corrected the errors of criticism, but judgment, and the reader who verifies this fact will probably wonder why in a work intended to delight him with facilities of immediate reference, J and I and U and V, whether initials, medials, or finals, are so curiously commingled. Dr. Johnson is followed by Walker in his spelling 'skeptick,' though with a remonstrance of the latter—who, however, does not spell *skeleton*—against the conformation of spelling to a pronunciation contrary to analogy, as pregnant with the greatest evils that can befall a language. The learned doctor has in the same way preserved the old landmark, which at any time might guide the original proprietors in a resumption of their property, by writing "skirrhus," a word by the way spelt by Bailey and Fenning somewhat eccentrically, and altogether incorrectly—*schirrhus*. The terminations -ize and -ise have caused much perplexity. Some tell us to use -ize where the word is derived from the Greek, or from another English word, but -ise where the word is not so derived, or with respect to us is primitive. Thus we shall write systematize, fertilize, but surprise, assise; size, prize, apprise, and many other words must then be regarded as the exceptions which abundantly prove every rule in English orthography. Webster simply says that -ize is most affected by American, -ise by English printers. Johnson's rule, if he possessed any, must have been extremely subtle, since he gives us bastardize but dastardise. He is supported by Nares in his preference of such spellings as *affraid*, *agen*, *ake*, *anthymn*, *causey*, *cimeter*, *devest*, *gelly*, and *indeleble*.

Walker, who published his dictionary in 1791, gives us *daub* but *be-daub*, and proposes, though he does not introduce it into the body of his work, *judgement* on analogy of *lodgement*, *bluly* on the analogy of *truly*, *wholely* on the analogy of *solely*, and, as he says, there is no hope of restoring the double l to *talness*, &c., he would write *ilness*, &c., making the less numerous class follow the majority. But the contrary of this has, as we

know, taken place. Analogy is the rock on which most of our lexicographers have incurred damage, but it is in English orthography what moral considerations are in law—nothing. Letters, says the author of *Epea Pteroenta*, like soldiers, are apt to fall off in a long march; they are seldom added on as in latchet, upholsterer, scent, whole, redoubt, vineyard, leather, tongue, launch, &c.; but lexicographers have cashiered several before they have manifested any symptoms of fatigue. This injustice has been perpetrated in *waterfal*, &c.; but Walker was unwilling to lose the *u* in *favor* and *honor*, those two servile attendants—as he was very angry with them he said this—on cards and notes of fashion. In his time, however, favour and honour were looked upon as gauche and rustic in the extreme, while *errour* and *authour* were decidedly antiquated though quite correct in the days that were accustomed to see “*sewet*” and “*skeleton*.” Johnson’s capricious behaviour has been already alluded to, and he has been followed by Walker with a touching fidelity. Walker’s reverence for so great a man would not allow him to spell the final syllable of anterior and posterior alike. The tendency to drop the *u* is obvious, and will, if anything can be predicted in so unsettled a matter, at last prevail. Webster, who succeeded Walker, left it out in every case. In *neighbor* he has delivered a good old Saxon subject from French tyranny, but he looked a long way off when he wrote *Savior*, a word which, from its sacred associations, will probably long continue a solitary exception.

Webster went so far in dropping the final *k*, that he introduces us to *bishopric* and *hassoc*, a spelling which in this country would be regarded, if not as faulty, at least as a startling singularity. On the ground of etymology alone he enriched our tongue with *bridegroom*, *fether*, *melaasses*, and some other words which, though highly applauded by German critics, and in his own opinion very desirable changes, met with rude treatment from the English public. Amongst some 2,000 words, which according to him may be spelt differently, we find *cosey*, *hookey*, *jutty*, and *leggin*. None of these fashions have as yet been duly appreciated or cordially received, and some dozen years after the publication of his first dictionary, Webster ceased in his endeavours to sweep out, like Mrs. Partington, the Atlantic with a broom; and *insted* of the *pretense* of his *exquisit doctrin*, restored to us most of our old words, the fair humanities of present orthography, the intelligible forms of our modern poets.

The English atmosphere proving uncongenial to the strange exotics he ventured to acclimatize, Webster departed without being desired, and Worcester reigned in his stead. This gentleman, who, dreading the improprieties and absurdities which it is the duty of a lexicographer to correct or proscribe, has introduced us to such expressions as *unperiwigged*, *skrimpy*, *scrimption*, *kittlebusy*, *shopocracy*, *unleisuredness*, *weism*, *unwormwooded*, *wegotism*, *solivagous*, did little more besides than clip the orthographical wings of Webster when they soared a little too far off for the public eye. In the meantime, this enlightened public, consulting the

various lexicographers in their various emergencies, and meeting with very various information, concludes that nothing can be dearer to dictionary writers than contradiction, and that the whole body is animated by the father of perversity and lies. Mr. Jones is justly indignant when he is informed, on no small authority, that Dr. Johnson has nearly fixed the external form of our language, and that his dictionary may be regarded as an authoritative standard for all time to come. Comparing this with the uphill and the downhill, the bastardize and the dastardise, the *agen*, *gelly* and *affraid*, the worthy Jones concludes that he is going out of his mind, or that these and the like matters are some of those mysteries which heaven would not willingly have earth to know. "Why," ejaculates Jones, "should one dictionary spell *program*, another *programme*, but never a one of them *epigramme* or *telegramme*? Why should we write *organise* but *civilize*, *chlorine* but *tannin*, *biped* but *centipede*? Which is right, *saddler* or *sadler*, *fattener* or *fatner*? And to return to Johnson, why should he insist on spelling *coddle* with one *d*, and thus destroy the distinction between a fish and a boiling apple?" How is it that, if Johnson may be trusted, Bacon spelt *wezil*, Dryden *weazon*, Shakspeare *wezand*, Spenser *weasand*, and Dr. Johnson himself *wesand*, and how is Mr. Jones to spell it? Why is uniformity sacrificed to custom in convey and inveigh, deceit and receipt? Which of the four is the right way to spell the legal term for calling on men to serve as a jury? And so Mr. Jones ends, like the devils, in trembling, though he cannot, like them, believe.

Seldom have there been wanting ingenious speculators in language, who endeavoured to crystallize that which must ever remain in solution, to make constant quantities which must always be variable. The dust of centuries has kindly concealed the efforts of Probus and Priscian, of Capser and Manutius. What learned arguments supported *solicito* and *solicito*, *stylus* and *stilus*! How many tongues wagged and pens quivered ere we agreed—if indeed we have yet agreed—to write *adscisco*, not *ascisco*; *adolescens*, not *adulescens*; *Africa*, not *Aphrica*; *alitus*, not *altus*: for which last the Latin student, it may be, is seldom grateful to Diomedes; *allium*, not *alleum*; *Apollo*, not *Appolo*, all for sound reasons which the reader will no doubt willingly excuse? In France, Joubert in 1570 was for writing *tems*, *wres*, like D'Alembert wrote *home*, on that principle—old like love, and yet ever new—of accommodating spelling to pronunciation, and which would, were it adopted in French, leave no distinction to the eye, as already there is none to the ear, between *poise*, *peas* and *pitch*. The change attributed to Voltaire of *avait*, *était*, from *avoit*, *étoit*, has indeed prevailed. How energetic were the endeavours of Ménage, that stupendous etymologist, who penetrated into the derivation of *laquais*! It is, said he, derived from *verna* thus: *verna*, *vernacula*, *vernaculaio*, then cut the word in two, cast away *verna* as of no consequence, and you have *culaco*, *lucaio*, *laquais*! Can anything be more simple, more obvious, more convincing? In England how many spelling reformers, how many architects of uncouth

words have done their best to deserve well of their country by ruining its language for ever! Most or all aimed at uniformity, and, by the introduction of new signs, a virtually phonetic system. The result of their endeavours may be briefly shown by that indigenous monster a pronouncing dictionary, or a *prurnounshing dikshonairi*, or a *pronounshing dikshunare*, which would transform our tongue, the tongue of Shakspeare, &c., around which cluster so many hallowed associations, &c., into the dialect of some tribe of North American Indians. There are who, in their desire of shortness and facility, would have uprooted Saxon, Greek, and Latin landmarks alike, while others less unreasonable were for retrenching only those letters which were of no etymological or other apparent service, for example, the *a* in *acroach*, which, as has been seen, Cotgrave spelt, with every argument on his side, *aceroch*. But all who endeavour to accommodate orthography to pronunciation have indeed forgotten that this is, as Dr. Johnson says, to measure by a shadow, by a model which is changing even while it is applied. Such men would imitate that which varies in every place and at every time, would seek to fix the colour of the chameleon—town and country, city and court, would each exhibit a distinct spelling-book. Had such an attempt prevailed in the last century, Rome would have been now *Room*, broil, joint and poison, *brile*, jint and *pison*; fault would have become *fort* or *fought*; all fashionable folk would have written obliged *obleeged*, great *greet*, key *kay*, and tea *tay*, with dozens of other differences.

Chief amongst these literary pioneers, melancholy scarecrows to reforming innovators, is the learned Cheke. This gentleman should have published a vocabulary for his re-translation of Matthew, which is quite unintelligible without such assistance. Sir Thomas Smith, Secretary of State to Elizabeth, by such spellings as *kiks*, *kap*, *kis*, brought a grateful pupil to acknowledge—in Latin—that his master had introduced him into another and a better world, where all things were new and true alike. He adds that he must have passed all his antecedent existence in some Platonic cave, where shadows did duty for substance, and concludes his compliment by beseeching the said Smith to continue his instruction, and so extricate him from that *Limbo Patrum* or Purgatory in which he is at present involved. Bullokar, who was considerate enough to have regard for the feelings of posterity, a rare virtue among his class, kindly introduced but few symbols among his fables which he published in London towards the close of the sixteenth century. Therefore, a specimen may be given in which some wandering stars of night, in the shape of accents, have been, it is trusted, discreetly omitted. *The hous cok found a precios ston, whylst he turned the dunghil : saying, what ! doo I find a thing so briht ?* But still the heart did need a language, and a certain Dr. Jones stepped forward. This excellent scholar proposed with God's help to sweeten our tongue by writing *Diznary* for Dictionary, with other like amendments which would from the beginning prevent all those ill habits of sounding amiss, which create such insufferable trouble to remedy them afterwards.

To prevent this trouble, following the fashionable pronunciation of his time, he wrote *poticary*, *obstropulous*, *sparrowgrass*, *chaw*, *lorum*, and *cubberd*, thus annihilating the etymological diagnosis of the original words as completely as that of sciatica, palsy, dropsy and proxy. Though the gh in plough and slaughter, and the h in white and what, are as much neglected as the monuments of our fathers in a churchyard, still they are monuments, and should not be lightly destroyed. In these matters the head followed the tail sufficiently already without the leading of the learned Jones. He, after scattering a few other suggestions such as *hevvy*, *pleshure*, *côte*, *tüchy*, *square*, *blö*, *wel*, *dauter*, and *coff*, retired from the stage, thinking these improvements enough for the present, and encouraged by a panegyric from a friend which represents him as the tamer of a wild orthography, and the suggestor of a clew to follow her into her most confused labyrinths. So Dr. Jones died, with the proud consciousness of leaving this world when he was summoned out of it, as one who had not lived in vain; and Bishop Wilkins, though with but faint hopes of seeing his practice generally prevail, succeeding him, wrote the Lord's prayer thus: *Yör Fädher hütish art in héven, halloëd be dhyi nám, dhyi cingdým, &c.*

Such orthography would indeed have made our language "that precious deposit" which we wot of. Such surely was the English which Charles V. preferred for conversation with his horse. But none of these rackers of orthography, as Holofernes calls them, came at all near to Mr. A. J. Ellis. The words of this gentleman were assuredly like those of Claudio in *Much Ado about Nothing*, a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. Noting very justly, as so many had equally justly noted before him, that the darkest ciphers and most abstruse hieroglyphics are not better calculated to conceal the sentiments of those using them than our customary orthography to conceal true pronunciation, remembering the words of Murray, that the orthography of the English language is attended with much uncertainty and perplexity, but forgetful of the fate of those, his predecessors, and how impatient the ungrateful British public is of any change for the better, and that its ears are, to adopt the language of Demosthenes, orthographically diseased past cure, this gentleman rendered his name remarkable by the production of what he was pleased to describe as the *Fonetik Nuz*. His alphabet contained some two score characters, each with one and only one sound. It was modelled on that of Lipsius, containing 286 characters. Each sound was supposed in Ellis's system, which, it is said, had been before offered to Webster by Dr. Franklin, to have its equivalent sign, each sign its equivalent and single sound. By this phonetic alphabet—relatively phonetic, for speaking generally all alphabets are phonetic which are not ideographic or pictorial—the writing of such diverse conceptions as "I saw the man whet the knife," and "I saw the man who ate the knife," would be identical; so of such single words as reign, rein, rain. To Ellis, *ewe*, whose vulgar pronunciation generally prevails, and *aye*, the

respective sounds of which words are not produced by any of their letters separately or in combination, must have been a terrible eyesore. Nor could he have been well content with the economical use of a in *father, fall, fatal*. Whether he had his revenge in writing *yowzitch* for usage, in which no single letter of the original word remains, or whether this be a tale of a man delighting in his own conceits more than in the truth, it is certain that, esteeming the spelling of his day an absurd conventionality, he produced an orthography of his own as little connected with it as a treatise on the Digamma with the sources of the Nile. What would a French Ellis have made out of his mayor, his mother, and his sea? his green; his glass, and his worms?—what of such a sentence as this: “*cinq cent sincères et simples capucins ceints de leurs saints coussins scindaient dans leurs seins, leurs seings et leurs cymbales qui donnaient une symphonie synchronique?*” or of that cacophony of the French officer, who, wishing a rope placed across the street to keep back the crowd eager to bask in the sunshine of the royal eyes, cried repeatedly, “*qu’attend-on donc tant? que ne la tend-on donc tôt?*” What, if Ellis’s system were adopted, would become of the nobility (orthographic) of the celebrated families of the Smijth and the Ffrench? Written in the heterotypic character, what would remain but the ignoble Smith and French?

Owing to certain hideous and mystic symbols with which this system was interlarded, a specimen of it cannot be here reproduced; the types of that new tongue which was pleasantly called by its promoters a rational object of the greatest importance to all members of the community, have long ago been melted down into serviceable capitals and italics, pica and nonpareil. The conflagration of ignorance was not extinguished by the waters of Phoneticism. That boon from heaven, that inestimable blessing was not made common, but reserved only for a chosen few, who, it may be, still practise it in congenial privacy. No unseen path ever opened among the hills, and Mr. Isaac Pitman, the coadjutor of Ellis, laid down his own life on the altar of phonetic truth in vain. Alas! whether it was that the country was not yet prepared to receive so exquisite a present, or that the subscriptions lagged a little, it was announced in the infancy of a journal devoted to its interests, that, in obedience to the strict injunctions of his physician, the editor regretted to inform his readers that he was obliged to intermit the publication of his journal till perhaps the close of the year. There is no list of subscriptions in this number, and the journal never appeared again. Somewhere in the limbo of the moon may be found that forthcoming number among good intentions unsuccessful on this earth. Lecturers in its interest despised, it is to be hoped, gold and silver, for many received nothing but a Prayer-Book, roan gilt, in phonetic spelling, and the reward of their own conscience. *Peas*, as *Punch* said somewhat cruelly, *peas 2 iz hashes!*

Such was the end of the modest proposal to the English nation to deface its orthographical escutcheon, to place the wise at the feet of the

ignorant, and to make all its old learning comparatively useless. Its authors forgot, as their predecessors had forgotten, that words had become conventional signs, Chinese characters, less musical utterances than algebraical symbols, and that no educated person goes through the form of spelling when he reads. Such "silly affectation and unpardonable presumption," as it has been, perhaps, not too harshly called, was not that reform which Mr. Max Müller hopes for in our "unhistorical, unsystematic, unintelligible, unteachable, but by no means unamendable spelling."

Although we have *dore* for *door* in a line of Gower, quoted by Ben Jonson in his grammar, the changes which have taken place in spelling have happily seldom been made on any phonetic system. Prove and move are still written thus, though retaining the sound of the French words from which they came. They have mostly arisen from considerations of etymology, from caprice, from desire of distinction, from affectation or from that lazy love of uniformity, to which we owe our modernized ancient authors. Though Bacon and Shakspeare, not to mention Gower and Chaucer, would be caviare to the general in their proper clothing, it is difficult to say that this change of ancient orthography does more good than harm.

The printers, as has been seen, have also contributed their share to orthographical alterations, and the desire of familiarizing the unknown has not been without effect. No lapse of years can conquer the tendency to phonetic endeavour. A simplification of the system of Ellis translated a passage of Shakspeare thus:—

¿Hwot! ¿iz de dje mor precezs dan de lark
bikwz hiz federz ar mor biutifal;
or ¿iz de ader betet dan de il,
bikwz hiz pentet skin kontentz de ei.

What would become of our glorious and inestimable privilege of speaking that tongue which Shakespeare or Shakspeare or Shakspeare, or, &c. spoke, if this sort of thing were to be allowed?

The least objectionable plan was that of Mr. Bell, who, to show sound without destroying orthography, and teach the former while the eye was still accustomed to the latter, wrote *debt*, *plough*, &c. How he could have expressed *cough* is not clear. So this best laid scheme, like the rest, went agley, and Mr. Bell has remained, like Diogenes in Raphael's picture of Philosophy, alone.

In our own time, Dr. Brewer, who has rendered himself so justly dear to the rising generation by his collection of such inquiries as "Why do we poke the fire?" and "What blackens the saucepans?" is perhaps the heresiarch of schismatic orthographers. In sober seriousness he suggests the following reforms—*thiefs*, *calfs*, *loafs*, *wifes*, *negros*, *danse*, *flowerist*, *entranse*, *innocense*, *excede*, *changable*, with very many more than a whole page of this magazine could contain in pearl types. It is but justice to say that he has supported all these eccentricities with which he would enrich the Queen's English and earn the heartfelt gratitude of every

school-girl with very able arguments. He expects to be condemned heartily, *odium orthographicum* being only second, as might be expected, to *odium theologicum*, but follows the example of Demosthenes or Themistocles, or whoever it was that faced the many-headed beast with the words "Strike but hear!"

Perhaps one of the most extraordinary proceedings after that of Ritson, who wrote *flys, i, il, wel, and horsées*, was that of Pinkerton, who may be surnamed the consonant-hater. He, thinking English was defective in music, owing to the infrequency of vowel endings, on comparing it with the Greek, set about briskly to some reformation. All plural s's he turned at once into a's, an Icelandic plural, and thus consonant to the genius of our tongue, so dogs became *doga*. Next the radical s, an innocent letter which he seems to have regarded with inveterate hatred, was where possible converted into z, as *azz*; thus he substituted the melodious buzz of the bee for the harsh hissing of the serpent. O, a fine and rare close, was introduced to impart sublimity to the period, thus *cato* for cat. He, quoth Pinkerton, who would hesitate to write *tric* or *coc* need never attend a concert or look at a picture. The general effect of this permutation its proposer himself allowed might be at first astonishing, but maintained that in half a century it would become not only familiar but elegant. "Luckilizzime," observed a witty fellow who had liberally caricatured the system, "this propozalio of the abzurdizzimo Pinkertonio was noto adoptado by anybodyino whateverano!" Then the ingenious author angrily observed that all things in nature might be ridiculed by the feeble faculties of sciolists employed on unusual objects, and quoted Montesquieu, who is ungallant enough to say that women are the supreme judges of the absurd, owing to the general imbecility of their understandings. He might have earned the praise of posterity, had he not in all innocence printed the *Vision of Mirza* in his own tongue. It survives him bound up in his book, a sempiternal scarecrow!

It will probably by this time be apparent to the ingenuous reader that "not to know how to spell" is not so great a disgrace as it is usually supposed to be. Let him try any of his most learned friends with Massachusetts, Mississippi, or Pennsylvania—with the sounds expressed by those excellent masquerades, yacht and phthisis—with liquefy and rarify—and he will find with sorrow or with satisfaction that humanity is imperfect. Monographic riddles are inherent in the nature of our language, and men do not conceive of its difficulties as they ought. They enter the portals of spelling, that labyrinth of infinite complexities, with insufficient reverence. As Archbishop Laud is reported to have gracefully observed in the Star Chamber, alluding to the careless behaviour of Christians in Church, "they enter it as a tinker and his bitch the ale-house." Cacography is like the seven deadly sins; men commit both every day without being aware of it. Universal disfranchisement would be the result of making good spelling the qualifi-

cation of a voter. Orthography is the least satisfactory point of English grammar, with the exception perhaps of orthoepy. In no part of it are there more anomalies. This indeed might be expected in an irregular and fortuitous agglutination of two irregularities, the Anglo-Saxon and the Norman French. Our language is a Joseph's coat of many colours, a wall in which many different stones are bound together. Our alphabet is notoriously redundant in k and x, and defective in sounds of sh, ng, &c. The number of different combinations of letters producing one sound is only to be compared with that of the different sounds arising from the same combination of letters. The indefatigable Ellis is said to have discovered 6000 different ways of spelling scissors, e.g. *schizzers*, *scissaughs*, *cizers*, and so forth. For this wide field of possibility of error, this appendix to the curse of Babel, candidates for the civil and military service, those youthful and unskilled labourers in the vineyard of English philology, are no doubt devoutly thankful. And what shall be said of the unfortunate foreigner who dares attempt our tongue, and finds on the threshold that we speak what we do not write, and write what we do not speak. How will he conquer those ugly-headed monsters, though, tough, &c., which conceal like devilish and complex masks the innocent and simple *tho* and *tuff*, &c. We have heard of a Spaniard who received, for his first lesson in English spelling and pronunciation, the mnemonic lines—

Though the tough cough and hiccough plough me through,
O'er life's dark lough I still my way pursue.

He, feeling his native pride wounded, and his natural love of congruity outraged by such an assemblage of contradictions, quitted his master in disgust, and pursued his way no farther into the penetralia of our language. The trusting confidence of our children is well shown by their not accusing us of the basest fraud when we introduce them to these and the like peculiarities of our speech.

Many celebrated persons, without entering into an orthographical crusade and revolutionizing the English spelling, like James Elphinstone, a man of considerable learning—who commenced a treatise on that subject thus: "*To those hoo poses dhe large work, a succinct warv of English orthoggraphy may be az plezing, az to odders indispensabel*"—have nevertheless in a quiet way entered their protest against the fashion of their time. Milton wrote *sovan*, for instance, *therefor*, *highth*, in which last he was followed by Landor, who also wrote *Aristotles* on analogy of Empedocles, which is rarely, except in a young ladies' finishing school, pronounced Empedocle, though he hesitated to write *Brute* or *Lucrece* on the analogy of Terence, nor on the analogy of Pliny did he venture to speak of Marius by that name for which Byron confesses his preferential passion. Tennyson has adopted *plow*. The timid Cowper was bold enough to write *Greecian* in his translation of Homer, after the fashion of Greece. Lardner wrote *clandestin*, *famin* (in words of this kind the final e seems not only useless but injurious), *perseue*, *sais*, *praface*. A sample of Mitford's peculiarities is *iland*, *endeavor*.

He considered the 's' in the former word, what indeed it is, a graft of ignorance. Hare, lately followed by Furnival, held it so much of a baseness to spell fashionably, that he roundly abused such pot-bellied words as spelled for *spell* in the preterites of weak verbs, and gave us *preacht*, &c. with such genitive plurals as *geniuses*, and threw into the bargain *invey* and *atchieve*. He also maintained that mute 'e' should be expunged when not softening a preceding consonant, or lengthening a preceding vowel. Byron finding it impossible to determine but from the context, whether "read" be past or present, wrote *redde*, though he might have written *red* like led, there being little fear of its being confounded with the colour. Thirlwall inveighed against our established system, if the result of custom and accident may be called system, as a mass of anomalies, the growth of ignorance and chance, equally repugnant to good taste and common sense. But notwithstanding the good bishop's tirades, the British public never never will be slaves, even to an Academy. They cling to their old spelling with an impulsion proportioned to its inconvenience, and are as jealous of any encroachment on their prescriptive domain as of a trespass on their right in the public parks. We know what would become of English loyalty if her most Gracious Majesty were to take it into her royal head to close St. James's. Tyrwhitt, aware of this, contented himself with but few varieties, such as *rime*, a spelling which derivation, analogy, and ancient use alike support, and *could*, which being obviously derived from *can* adds in its present state to the unnecessary anomalies in our language. The obtaining orthography arose out of uniformity probably with *would* from *will* and *should* from *shall*, and even in these words the 'l' has unfortunately long ceased to be pronounced. With regard to *rime*, it were perhaps better written *ryme*, to distinguish it from hoar-frost. The Elizabethan impurity of the 'h' has been traced to Daniel. It is never found in Milton or Shakspeare. It arose most likely from the notion that the word was connected with rhythm. The learned Trench, in his *English Past and Present*, 1868, curiously enough discards "y" in *ryme* as a modern mis-spelling.

The unsettled nature of our language has made its variations much more remarkable than those in other countries. Petrarch is still understood fairly by the modern Italian, but the modern Englishman can bring up little from the well of English undefiled without a glossarial bucket. Lest he should fall into the same evil plight with Spenser, Swift was sanguine enough to propose a scheme to the Earl of Oxford for curbing any further variations in orthography; but that, as we have seen, was a work beyond the King and his Ministers. The son of the Prince of Wales may not now "chaste" his schoolmaster as Robert the Devil effectually "chasted" his with a long dagger, when the unlucky pedant suggested that the spelling of Robert was exceptional; and in that case we have no ground to suppose that the "Devil's" spelling ultimately prevailed. Cæsar was a greater than he, and yet could not introduce a word; Claudian also, and yet could not introduce a letter. Kings and

scholars must alike succumb to the tyranny of custom, and of that tyrant women chiefly are the executive and the body-guard. Their love of variety has probably produced as many new spellings as their love of eloquence has begotten new words. What are the dry rules of etymology to them when the usual spelling offends the delicacy of their ear? We have heard of a lady at a Spelling Bee—at present a silly, and so very popular entertainment—a pretty young lady, who spelt myrrh thus: *murr*. What could be more simple, more novel, more ingenious? At least three-fourths of the male portion of the audience went away with the secret conviction that, although the dry little old gentleman who presided as referee, and a big dictionary to boot, were adverse to the candidate, the pretty young lady had a great deal which might be said on her side, and that if the word was not by some prejudiced people spelt as she had elected to spell it, it ought decidedly in future to be spelt so. The graceful appearance of our written language is indeed mainly owing to our women. These are at the head of what Chesterfield called the polite as opposed to the pedantic orthography. In the former they rule supreme. Learning here is rather disadvantageous than otherwise; it curbs the freedom of their imagination. *Sit non doctissima conjux*, says Martial—who might have rested well content in our island home. Who but a woman first dared to spell *esp-à-pie apple-pie*, or *farsed-meat forced-meat*? Would any man have enriched his favourite ornament with four changes of costume, as *riband, ribon, ribbon, ribband*? Who but one of these eminent rebels first wrote *exiccate*, or introduced that arbitrary but interesting diversity between *laggard* and *braggart*? To whom are we indebted for the perihelion of those capricious stars — *kicksey-wicksey, welsh-rabbit, cuddle, poppet, higgledy-piggie*, and *tootsicums*, or the aphelion of *foupe, conjobble, warhable, smegmatick, screable, ablaqueation, moble, hamble, drumble, nubble*, which it may well be Johnson was barbarous enough to forge himself, in jealous rivalry, in order to spite the sex; but his efforts were, as they deserved to be, quite unavailing? No one, however, of mortals is happy on all sides. Our fair reformers have sometimes suffered inconvenience from their auricular orthography. Instances have been quoted of a lady writing to a gentleman to inquire after his health in such bold eccentricity of spelling as excited suspicion of an assignation in the breast of that gentleman's wife; of another who exercised her right and privileges so capriciously in the composition of a domestic receipt that a whole family were nearly poisoned by partaking of the ingredients of what was entitled a new *soup*, but which in ordinary orthography would have been a new *soap*.

Soyez de votre siècle, is a motto which women seldom forget in fashion; it is one which neither men nor women should ever forget in spelling. We must not be the first, as Pope says in his "Essay on Criticism," to try the new words nor yet the last to lay aside the old. But after all it will not be among the least of the blessings of heaven, that spelling probably will not there be necessary.

French Peasant Songs.

IN such a singing country as France proverbially is, it seems odd that we hear so little of genuine popular ballads—of the songs that the peasant makes for himself. Almost every European country offers abundance of these artless verses. The ballads of Greece have been edited again and again; those of Denmark have been translated into English; Mr. Ralston has made us familiar with the songs of the Russian, and Mr. Symonds with those of the Italian people. All these lays present vivid pictures of the life of the peasants, their customs, beliefs, regrets; but the picture of French manners that may be put together out of French *Volkslieder* has been, comparatively, little regarded. We scarcely think of the French country-folk as possessing *Volkslieder* at all. The higher Muse has rarely looked on them with favour; they make little figure in any artistic poetry. To be sure, there is a pretty mediæval comedy of *Robin and Marion*, and the *pastourelles* of the *trouvères* do justice to the charms and sometimes to the virtue of shepherdesses. The rustic in that most ancient French novel, *Aucassin et Nicolette*, who tells the lover how his lady had passed by—"li plus bele du monde, si que nos quidames que ce fust une fée, et que tos cis bois en esclarci"—is a poetical figure enough; but later French poetry has little to say of the real country-folk, who, on their part, seem as silent in song as if they remembered that threat of the *trouvère*, "If I were king over the villeins, not one should dare to open his mouth, were it so much as to ask for bread or to say his pater noster." The villein, in short, did not sing loud enough to be heard, and thus have attention drawn to his lightness of heart. French society oppressed him, French literature left him alone; and M. Taine has well remarked how rarely even Molière dares to bring a rustic upon the stage. His Charlotte, in the *Festin de Pierre*, may match with Audrey in *As You Like It*; and his Lubin is a good heavy clown; but, as a rule, Molière does not work a mine of humour which Shakspeare found so rich.

Coming to our own century, most authorities do not give the idea that the French peasant is a poetical creature. If we knew him only through the pictures of Millet, where his monotonous toil meets us everywhere, and his grave face and solemn demeanour are in keeping with the dark woods, grey skies, and colourless plains; or if we accepted Balzac's account of him; we might give up the search for French folk-songs. There is neither humour, superstition, gaiety, nor memory of the past, in Balzac's rustics. Their only care is to add *arpent* to *arpent*

of land; to poach in the fields and plunder the woods of their richer neighbours; their only knowledge a pettifogging acquaintance with the laws of trespass. The least offensive of all Balzac's detestable *paysans* is le Père Fourchon—a kind of sordid Edie Ochiltree, full of a crafty malice, by which he gains a rascally livelihood. Among people like the Fourchons it would be vain to look for remains of traditional ballads or for country poets. But there is a healthier, a more idyllic side of French life, which is the favourite theme of George Sand. Much of her long life has been passed in an unspoiled part of Berry; and her description of the peasant superstitions and practices is among the most delightful parts of her work. She has been present when a peasant-boy actually beheld *la Grand' Bête*, that mysterious terror of the night, a flying creature of indefinite form, which haunts the wolds of Yorkshire as well as of Berry. She has had the advantage of the friendship of a second-sighted poacher, who used to discover, in a kind of trance, where the rare and infrequent rabbit might be lurking. She has known elderly warlocks who had the art of calling wolves into a circle, and others who had the secret of the fiend "Georgeon," or who understood the language of cattle, or at least who had heard *le Grand Veneur*—the French Arthur's Hunt—sweep past, with cries and blowing of horns, through the forest. Quite lately a countryman of Madame Sand's, M. Laisnel de la Salle, has confirmed her stories by evidence of his own.* He has hunted the *Grand' Bête* (can that monster be our old "questing beast" of the *Mort d'Arthur*?) back to his pagan cover, or at least far into the middle ages. He has given learned explanations of superstitions which go to prove, what indeed is most probable, that the beliefs of the peasantry are derived from immemorial antiquity. The most ghastly heath-folk of Berry are *les laveuses de la nuit*—weird women, busy washing in the moonlight, by lonely tarns and meres, to the sound of their own monotonous dirges. What it is that they wash, no one knows. Some say the winding-sheets of the men and women that are to die within the year; others, that the white and phosphorescent substance they handle is the soul of a suicide or of an unchristened babe. In any case, the belated peasant thinks that he does well to shun moonlit pools of water and the company of grey women. Besides the weird women, there are, of course, fairies, *fades* or *fées* (*fata*), maidens who spin and comb their long hair by the roads, who steal away infants, and dance in the wind's eddies, like the wilis, fairies, and nereids of other European countries. There is very little said about these beings in the ballads of France, for they are not to be named too rashly, though the Celtic ballads of Brittany venture to make free with the *korrigan*.

There are happier remains of paganism than the belief in fays, and the dread of the *Grand' Bête*, in Berry, as in Lorraine. The summer

* *Croyances et Légendes du Centre de la France*, Par Laisnel de la Salle. Paris, 75.

solstice is celebrated with dance and song on S. John's Eve. The parish curé comes forth with a glad procession of boys and girls to light the immemorial fire, through which, of old in Palestine, the children were passed to Moloch. In France, too, the dancers leap in the dying embers or bound across the falling flame, and end the revel by carrying off ashes, supposed to have a medical virtue. S. John's Eve is the great feast of Summer—the feast that many of the French ballads commemorate in their burden. It was on S. John's Eve that the lover, in one of the prettiest of folk-songs, met his sweetheart wandering by the cool water-side, and sang to her a song with this refrain:—

Beau pommier, beau pommier,
Qu'est si chargé des fleurs
Que mon cœur d'amour.
Il n'y faut qu'un p'tit vent
Pour envoler ces fleurs,
Il ne faut qu'un jeune amant
Pour y gagner mon cœur.

Oh, fair apple-tree, and oh, fair apple-tree,
As heavy and sweet as the blossoms on thee,
My heart is heavy with love.
It wanteth but a little wind
To make the blossoms fall;
It wanteth but a young lover
To win me, heart and all.*

Another festival, almost as famous, is that of May Day. Lovers come in the night, and plant blossoming boughs where their mistresses will find them in the morning; or they hide bouquets of symbolic flowers—myrtle, ivy, mignonette—all with their secret message.

Un jour de mai
Cà m'y prend une envie
D' planter un mai
A la porte de ma mie.

Flowers, birds, and clouds, in the ballads, are all the messengers of love, and carry the letters of peasants, who know not any other literature. Here is a song from *La Vendée*:—†

Ma mie reçoit de mes lettres
Par l'alouette des champs,
Elle m'envoie les siennes
Par le rossignol chantant.

Sans savoir lire ni écrire,
Nous lisons ce qui est dedans:
Il y a dedans ces lettres,
Aime-moi, je t'aime tant.

I send my love letters
By larks on the wing;
My love sends me letters
When nightingales sing.

Without reading or writing,
Their burden we know:
They only say, "Love me,
Who love you so."

* *Romancero de Champagne*. Tarbé.

† *Le Moniteur*, Feb. to May, 1855.

Here is another mode of communication between peasant lovers—

Je donnerai ma lettre
Au grand nuage d'argent
Qui pass' deesus tes champs.

This simple imagery has survived from the time of the *trouvères*, when Flore, the pagan prince, wooed Blanche fleur, the Christian princess, with

Lettres d'amour sans contredire,
Et de cans d'oisiaus et de flors,
Lettres de salus et d'amors.

The songs which are current at certain feasts, as at Christmas, May Day, St. John's Eve, are obviously remains of the true singing age of France. There is a time in the history of a people when it has a song ready for every event and business of life. Men and women chant to themselves, as children may be heard to do. George Sand says of herself, that when she was a girl of ten "it seemed to me that song was my natural way of expressing my feelings and emotions. When I was alone in the garden, I set all my actions to song, so to speak. Thus—

papillons jolis,
Venez sur mes fleurs !

and when I was sad, or fell in thoughts of my mother, I would utter endless little elegies (*complaintes*), which slowly lulled my melancholy." What children do now, men and women in the peasant class have done in early times, and the "ring-dances" of girls in France and Scotland are the remains of the choral dances, with songs, which still exist in Greece. Now popular ballads, in their origin, are only the song that goes in place of music, with the dance. Even still, in Poitou and Saintonge, when a new dance is brought from Paris, the "peasants cannot join in it till they have invented words to sing with the rhythmic movement." "There is no dance," says M. Bujeaud, who has printed a number of French ballads, with their music, "whether *bal*, *branle*, *ronde*, *bourrée*, or *gavotte*, to which the peasants do not adapt words."* These words are often frivolous, and sometimes so coarse as to be unquotable; but M. Bujeaud has rescued many of the ballads of ages gone by, songs of the cradle, of the holy seasons, of love, of wedlock, as well as fragments of romantic and narrative ballads, like those of the Romaic Greeks and of the Liddesdale borderers. Before examining the narrative popular poems, with their strange resemblance in plot, colour, sentiment, almost in words, to their counterparts in Spain, Denmark, and Scotland, it may be worth while to glance at those which reflect each successive moment in the life of the peasant. These songs are a lyrical accompaniment of his existence, just as the songs collected in the Finnish *Kalevala* depict all the events of the life of that primitive

* *Chants et Chansons Populaires des Provinces de l'Ouest*. Par Jérôme Bujeaud. Paris: Aubry, 1866.

people. But in no country is the story of the brief youth of the rustic, with the evanescent glow of sentiment, the early marriage, the short-lived joy, the struggle with poverty, age, and labour, so touchingly and passionately told, as in the ballads of France.

To begin with cradle-songs and lullabies. Those which are hummed over peasant children are much the same in every part of Europe. There are slumberous monotonous, sleepy songs, which appeal to *La Dormette*, a mythical old woman, who is fabled to cast sleep on the restless eyes of childhood.

Passez, la Dormette,
Passez par chez nous,
Endormir gars, fillettes,
La nuit et le jou'.

The wakeful baby, who is deaf to the charm of *La Dormette*, is promised all manner of future grandeur, as in the Romaic nurse's chant, that offers Constantinople for supper, Cairo for breakfast, monasteries, churches, fields, all the lordship of earth, to the little tyrant of his nurse. The French *berceuse* runs thus—

Tu seras roi, tu seras capitaine,
Portant l'habit doré
Et l'épée au côté,
Et parfait en beauté,
Tu s'ras aimé des belles.

How different, after all, from the pious Greek lullaby, with its promise of
eight little monasteries,
Where baby says his prayers!

Then there are nonsense verses, about the cat, the dog, the chicken, the five fingers and their eventful history, and a song accompanied by tapping the little foot:

"Maréchal, ferres tu bien?"
"Aussi bien que'toi!"

This child's song recurs in Scotch nurseries:—

"John Smith, fellow fine,
Can you shoe this horse of mine?"
"Yes, indeed, and that I can,
As well as you or any man!"

The child passes from the nursery, and is a boy among others of his age. With them he goes about in bands at Christmas, with carols and demands of gifts. There is one very pretty Noël:—

Entre le bœuf et l'Âne gris,
Dors, dors, dors, le petit fils,
Entre les deux bras de Marie,
Dors, &c.
Entre les roses et les lis,
Dors, &c.

These songs are called *guêtes*, and are inexhaustible.* They give place in summer to ring-dances, like those of the Scotch children, "round the merry May tanzy."† Already the promise of the cradle-song bears fruit in unchildlike longings :

Dans mon cœur, n'y a point d'amour,
Mais il y en aura quelque jour.

The "some day" comes only too soon, and the love-songs are chanted too early. These ditties—as sung by the French peasantry, and it is noticeable that though they talk in *patois*, they *sing* in French—fall under two heads. First, there are brief snatches of verses, charged with the sentiment of youth, of spring, of the birds, music, the mere joy of existence. These may be compared with the Italian carols and with the short Romaic scholia. Here is one :—

Si j'étais petite alouette,
Que je saurais voler !
Sur les seins de ma belle
J'irais bien me poser ;
Sur les seins de ma belle
J'irais prendre un balser.

Which exactly answers to the Romaic—

Χαλιδράκι νὰ γενῶ στήν κλίσην σου νὰ ἔλθω, ‡

The girl implores sun and moon to annihilate space, and make two lovers happy.

Ah Soleil, fond les rochers !
Ah Lune, bois les rivières !
Que je puisse regarder
Mon amant qui est derrière.

All these songs, in which the peasant expresses the brief glow of his early passion of love, before it is absorbed in the second and more lasting passion of gain, are often very tender, and full of artless music. The nightingale and the lark play the same parts as they do in the lyrics of the *trouvères* in the thirteenth century. The lover walks in the dusky fields, or in the apple-orchard of his father's close, and interprets what "the nightingale says in his Latin." His heart flies off on the wings of

* A number of them are printed in the earlier numbers of *Romania*.

† *Chambers' Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, p. 131. "The games of female children in Scotland are very pretty, and have often given delight to adult witnesses. They are in general of a dramatic, or perhaps rather operatic, character. A somewhat more fanciful antiquary than the present editor might suppose them to be, at the least, degenerate descendants of some masque-like plays, which in former times regaled grown children." Without being very fanciful, we may suppose them survivals of what we know to have existed in Gawaine Douglas's time—choral dances, *chori juvenum*, such as may still be seen in Greece.

‡ Legrand: *Recueil des Chansons Populaires Grecques*, p. 68.

the bird's soaring melody, *vole, mon cœur, vole!* Or it is a girl who answers the nightingale with the music of her own content:—

Derrière chez mon père

Il est un bois taillis :

Le Rossignol y chante

Et le jour et la nuit.

Il chante pour les filles

Qui n'ont pas d'ami ;

Il ne chante pas pour moi,

J'en ai un Dieu merci.

Serais-je nonnette, oui ou non ?

Serai-je nonnette ? je crois que non.

Yet even this is spoiled by a cynical after-thought in Poitou—

Après il faudra prendre

Un bouquet de souci :

Le souci d'un ménage,

L'embarras d'un mari !

The French emigrants in Canada have been fortunate in preserving a ballad of love, "Lost for a Rose's sake," free from the worldly reflection that spoils the songs of western France.*

The ground-note of artificial French poetry, the bitter regret for passing youth, and the end of pleasure, is heard even in the ditties of rural lovers. It is rarely that ballads avow their authorship, but one declares itself to have been composed by a lover and his lass :—

Qui a composé la chanson ?

C'est une fille et un garçon,

En cueillant la violette,

Le jasmin, le romarin.

The burden of this ditty is—

La fleur la plus tôt passée

C'est la fleur la giroflée,

Mais les filles sont de même!

The coincidence with Shakspeare's Lover and his Lass is very curious :

This carol they began that hour,

How that a life was but a flower.

This melancholy moral is too constantly present to the minds of "those pretty country-folk" of France; their dream of delight is too early broken, the lark is awake with his song, and drives away the nightingale's music and the night of spring :

A peine ensemble j'nous trouvion

Qu' l' alouett' fit entend' sa chanson.

"Vilaine alouett', v'là de tes tours ;

Mais tu mentis :

Tu nous chante le point du jour ;

C'est pas minuit."†

* *Chants Pop. dans le pays Messin.* Puymaigre, p. 386.

† *Laisnel de la Salle*, vol. ii. p. 49.

Now the songs change their tune. The girl is weary of home, of father and mother, and clamours for a husband—

Si l'on n'me marie bientôt,
Je ferai un beau tapage ;
Je cass'rai les plats, les pots,
Je cass'rai tout le ménage.

She deserves little sympathy when she discovers that a husband may be worse than kinsfolk, and his temper less endurable than the old grandmother's peevishness. The sun has scarcely set on the marriage-day when the village revellers come with a hideous chorus :—

Au bout d'un an, un enfant,
C'est la joyeuzerie,
Au bout d'deux ans, deux enfans,
C'est la mélancholie.
Au bout d'trois ans, trois enfans,
C'est la grande diablerie,
L'un qui demande du pain,
L'autre de la bouillie :
L'aut' qui demande à têter,
Et les seins sont taris.

The older epithalamium seems obsolete—

Enfin vous voilà, donc,
Ma belle mariée,
Enfin vous voilà, donc,
A votre époux liée,
Avec un long fil d'or,
Qui ne rompt qu'à la mort.

M. Bujeaud has printed twenty songs of marriage, and in not one of them is there a trace of any feeling save those of discontent and regret. Poverty comes to the door on the wedding-night, and warms herself by the fire ; in a week come the bailiffs, and in a month the pretty marriage dress has gone to the pawnbroker's. With marriage the songs are over and ended. Dirges of a pagan tone one does not find, as indeed is natural in a country where the Church has had her way so long.

A collector and translator of Danish folk-songs, Mr. Prior, has said that the French have no narrative and romantic ballads, or, at least, that he has failed to discover them. Rare the fragments certainly are, but specimens are scattered in several collections. Gérard de Nerval has printed a few, more were published in the *Moniteur*, from May to August, 1853 ; M. de Puymaigre and M. Damase Arbaud have been industrious in the country round Metz, and in Provence. Thus there are pickings, and the amateur finds snatches which suggest the idea that France may once have been as rich in ballad romances as Denmark, Scotland, or even Greece. For instance, there are two Scotch ballads called "The Gay Goss Hawk" and "May Colvine," of which we find

traces in France. The first tells of a maiden who feigned to be dead, and so was carried over the border to be buried, and there met her lover—

As soon as Lord William touched her hand,
Her colour 'gan to come.

"May Colvine," again, is the story of a lady whose bridegroom tried to drown her on their way to his house, but who got the better of him by a *ruse*, and drowned him. Now we find the plot of the first of these ballads in the French song of "*La Maitresse Captive*." But, curiously enough, the French reciters have added the tragely of "May Colvine" to the comedy of "*The Goss Hawk*," have made the lover, for whom the lady pretended to be dead, turn out a sort of Bluebeard, and have drowned him where he meant to drown his bride.

Quand ils ont venu au bord de l'eau,
"La belle, défaites votre manteau,
Votre chemise de vrai lin,
Qui paralt comme un satin."
"Ce n'est pas affaire aux chevaliers,
D'y voir les dames deshabillées,
Mais c'est affaire aux cavaliers,
De prendre un mouchoir, les yeux se bandeler."

For the result of this manœuvre "*May Colvine*" may be consulted.

But as Sir John he turned him round,
She threw him in the sea ;
Says, "Lye ye there, ye fausse Sir John,
Where ye thought to lay me."

That is—

La belle le prit par le côté,
Dans la rivière elle l'a jeté.

Whence came this story, which is current in Venice, Portugal, Brittany, Denmark, and Bohemia? Historical it can scarcely be, and, indeed, few French ballads have their source in history. There is some memory of the French marriage of our Henry V.—

Le roi a une fille à marier,
A un Anglois la veut donner,
Jamais mari n'épouserai,
S'il n'est François.

However, she goes on board ship with the *faux traître Anglois*, and, like Marie Stuart, takes a long last look on France :

Ote-toi, retire-toi, faux traître Anglois,
Car je veux voir jusqu'à la fin le sol François.

This ballad has a double ending. In one, *la belle finissoit ses jours d'un cœur joyeux* at midnight, in the other she made up her mind not to

mind it, and expressed her intention of proving a true wife to the *traitre Anglois*.*

Ballads of superstition are scarce, but there is a good one in the Provençal collection. Three orphans are beaten and starved by their stepmother, they go to their mother's tomb, and on the way they meet Lou Bouen Diou (Jesus). He bids the mother arise, and promises her seven years of life. When the seven years are over, the children tell the woman not to weep, for they will accompany her, and her people shall be their people. So a sad little procession, wherein the youngest sings a hymn, and the others bear mystic flowers and branches of hyssop and torches, returns to the graveyard. This song is found in Denmark, where the children remain on earth, and their stepmother dares never beat them when dogs howl at night. She fears that the dogs howl because graves are opening, and the dead are walking abroad to protect their own. One is reminded of the Yorkshire verse—

'Twas late in the night, and the bairns grat,
The mother below the mounds heard that.

Another superstition, that of the metamorphosis of girls into animals, is found in Normandy—

A mother and her daughter are walking in a wood; the mother sings, the maiden is silent. "Why dost thou weep, my daughter Marguerite?"

"I have a sore lot laid on me, that I dare not tell thee. I am a maiden by daylight, a white doe in the moonlight. The chase is up, and after me, the barons and the princes.

"And my brother Lion is far the keenest; go then, my mother, and tell him quickly, that he hold his hounds in leash till to-morrow is come."

* * * * *

"Good day, good day to thee, my son!" "Good day to thee, my mother."
"Where are thy hounds, Lion? Tell me, I prithee." "They are in the wild wood, a' chasing the white doe."

"Stay them, Lion, call them off, I pray thee." "Nay, thrice I have laid them on; the fourth time is come, and the white doe is taken."

"Let us send the forester to gallooch the white doe." Then said the forester, "What to say I wot not. This doe hath gold hair, and the breast of a maiden."

Lion went forth, as one out of comfort. "Behold, I had but one sister, and I have destroyed her.

"I am distraught and hopeless, and will do penance. For seven whole years will lie on the dank ground, with never a roof but the blossoms of whitethorn."†

Few French ballads have a more familiar sound than this, the plot of which does not occur, however, in any extant Scotch or English romance. On the other hand, most of the ballad commonplaces are the

* Bosquet: *La Normandie Romanesque*, p. 503. Another ballad may refer to Alix, who should have married our Richard I.

† Bosquet, p. 81. A verse is omitted in the translation.

same in the ballads of France as in our own country. There is the same luxury of gold and silver, silk and taffety. When the lover cuts the shroud of the pretended bride, he draws his *couteau d'or fin*. The very pruning-hook, in another lyric, is of gold. When the girls of Rochelle launch and man a boat—

La grand' voile est en dentelle,
La misaine en satin blanc,
Les cordages du navire
Sont de fils d'or et d'argent.

So, when the Demon Lover launches his ship, in the Scotch ballad—

The masts they were of the beaten gold,
The sails of taffetie.

Other coincidences with Scotch, and with Italian and Danish ballads, occur. One of the most curious is in the song of John of Tours, which Mr. Rossetti has translated into English. The French version merely tells how John of Tours, or Renaud, as he is sometimes called, came home wounded from the wars at the hour when his wife had borne him a child, how his arrival and death were concealed from her, and there follows a string of questions and answers—

“ Oh dites-moi, ma mère, m'amie,
Pourquoi les cloches sonnent ainsi ? ”
“ Ma fille, on fait la procession
Tout à l'entour de la maison.”
“ Oh dites-moi, ma mère, m'amie,
Quel habit mettrai-je aujourd'hui ? ”
“ Prenez du noir, prenez du blanc,
Mais le noir est plus convenant.”
“ Oh dites-moi, ma mère, ma mie,
Pourquoi la terre est rafraîchie ? ”
“ Je ne peux plus vous le cacher,
Votre mari est enterré.”

Now, in the Celtic version of this story, the young husband meets a *korrigan*, or fay, combing her long hair in the wood, and is bewitched to death by her. His wife also dies, and two oak-trees grew from their graves, like the “bush and brier” of English ballads, and the plane-trees planted by the nymphs on a tomb in the *Iliad*. The Scotch version, on the other hand, has lost all the poetry of the tale, and has degenerated into a mere sing-song of question and answer, with which children amuse themselves, and the dead husband and living wife have become a dead girl, and her lover, who, when he asks where she may be, is put off with replies, and at last is told, “Janet is dead and gone; she'll ne'er come hame.”

This loss of all mythological traits, and of all romance, is quite a “note” of popular narrative ballads in France. They turn on incidents common to other countries, as to Northern Italy, and to Greece and

Denmark, but they manage to reduce everything to a lower scale. Thus, in the Celtic ballad published by De la Villemarqué, it is a Crusader who leaves his wife at home, and on his return at the end of seven years, hears the "silvery voice" of a shepherdess, and finds that his bride has been driven out to the fields by the cruelty of his brother.* The song is full of allusions to red crosses, lances, pages, and all the local colour of feudalism. The French peasant has never heard of the Crusades; he makes the husband a Count indeed, who goes to the wars, but not for an idea, and certainly with no cross on his shoulder. Again, the French are necessarily without the material for songs like those which turn on the border raids of "Kinmont Willie" and "Dick-o'-the-Cow," or on the exploits of "Klephtha" in Greece. They have always been the victims of plundering warfare, in which they have struck no blow for themselves. Yet they have at least one ballad which sounds curiously like a Romaic Klephth song in its last verses. It tells of a soldier who deserted, was brought back, and shot. Indeed, deserting soldiers are the most adventurous people known to the rural muse in France, and she sympathises with their revolt, as the border minstrels, or the poets of the Greek highlands, have a feeling for daring freebooters. The runaway is taking farewell of his comrades, just before his execution, and he ends thus:—

Soldats de mon pays,
N' le dit' pas à ma mère.
Mais dites-lui plutôt,
Que je suis-t-à Bordeaux,
Prisonnier des Anglais,
Qu'on n'me r'verra jamais.

Now Fauriel has printed a Romaic ballad, in which one of two brother Klephths is shot by the Turks on the bank of a river. The wounded man bids his brother "make a boat of his body, and row with his hands" till he crosses the stream, and then to run to his home in the hills. One may translate the rest almost word for word into Scotch ballad form—

And if they ask for me, brother,
Say I come never home,
For I have taken a strange wife
Beyond the salt sea foam.
The green grass is my bridal bed,
The black tomb my good-mother,
The stones and dust within the grave
Are my sister and my brother.

Hère is all the difference between the peasant, pressed to fight for no cause he understands, and the free mountaineer, dying for his own home, with words in his mouth like those of Job, "I have said to corruption, thou art my father, to the worm thou art my mother and my sister."

* *Barzaz Breiz*. De la Villemarqué, p. 24.

Just enough remains of French native peasant song to show that in France, as in Italy, Greece, Russia, Scotland, there was a time of a now lost popular culture. Education will never restore the power of uttering verses such as those which Shakspeare and Goethe, and even Euripides, it is said, have deigned to borrow from the popular store—snatches of dirge and love-song, the wail of Electra over her dead, the mad song of Marguerite, the lament of Ophelia. The wild stock from which artistic poetry sprang is almost decayed, and it only remains for antiquarian curiosity to collect these withering flowers, and to note how near akin in every European country are the lyrical expressions of the emotions of the people.

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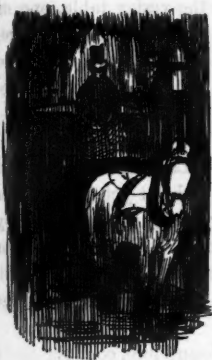


HIS LADY, AND WAS RUN OUT OF HOUSE.

The Hand of Ethelberta.

CHAPTER XLVII.

KNOLLSEA.—THE ROAD THENCE.—LYCHWORTH.



ALL eyes were directed to the church-gate, as the travellers descended the hill. No wedding carriages were there, no favours, no slatternly group of women brimming with interest, no aged pauper on two sticks, who comes because he has nothing else to do till dying time, no nameless female passing by on the other side with a laugh of indifference, no ringers taking off their coats as they vanish up a turret, no hobbledehoy on tiptoe outside the chancel windows—in short, none whatever of the customary accessories of a country wedding was anywhere visible.

"Thank God!" said Chickerel.

"Wait till you know he deserves it," said Mountclere.

"Nothing's done yet between them."

"It is not likely that anything is done, at this time of day. But I have decided to go to the church first. You will probably go to your relative's house at once?"

Sol looked to his father for a reply.

"No, I too shall go to the church first, just to assure myself," said Chickerel. "I shall then go on to Mrs. Petherwin's."

The carriage was stopped at the corner of a steep incline leading down to the edifice. Mountclere and Chickerel alighted and walked on towards the gates; Sol remaining in his place. Christopher was some way off, descending the hill on foot, having halted to leave his horse and trap at a small inn at the entrance to the village.

When Chickerel and Mountclere reached the churchyard gate they found it slightly open. The church-door beyond it was also open, but nobody was near the spot.

"We have arrived not a minute too soon, however," said Mountclere. "Preparations have apparently begun. Ha! ha! It was to be an early wedding, no doubt."

Entering the building, they looked around; it was quite empty. Chickerel turned towards the chancel, his eye being attracted by a red

kneeling-cushion, placed at about the middle of the altar-railing, as if for early use. Mountclere strode to the vestry, somewhat at a loss how to proceed in his difficult task of unearthing his brother, obtaining a private interview with him, and then, by the introduction of Sol and Chickereel, causing a general convulsion.

"Ha! here's somebody," he said, observing a man in the vestry. He advanced with the intention of asking where Lord Mountclere was to be found. Chickereel came forward in the same direction.

"Are you the parish clerk?" said Mountclere to the man, who was dressed up in his best clothes.

"I hev the honour of that calling," the man replied.

Two large books were lying before him on the vestry table, one of them being open. As the clerk spoke he looked slantingly on the page, as a person might do to discover if some writing were dry. Mountclere and Chickereel gazed on the same page. The book was the marriage-register.

"Too late!" said Chickereel.

There plainly enough stood the signatures of Lord Mountclere and Ethelberta. The viscount's was very black, and had not yet dried. Her strokes were firm, and comparatively thick for a woman, though paled by juxtaposition with her husband's muddled characters. In the space for witnesses' names appeared in trembling lines as fine as silk the autograph of Picotee, the second name being that of a stranger, probably the clerk.

"Yes, yes—we are too late it seems," said Mountclere, coolly.

Chickereel stood like a man baked hard and dry. Further than his first two words he could say nothing.

"They must have set about it early, upon my soul," Mountclere continued. "When did the wedding take place?" he asked of the clerk, sharply.

"It was over about five minutes before you came in," replied that luminary, pleasantly, as he played at an invisible game of pitch-and-toss with some half-sovereigns in his pocket. "I received orders to have the church ready at five minutes to eight this morning, though I knew nothing about such a thing till bedtime last night. It was very private and plain, not that I should mind another such a one, sir;" and he secretly pitched and tossed again.

Meanwhile Sol had found himself too restless to sit waiting in the carriage for more than a minute after the other two had left it. He stepped out at the same instant that Christopher came past, and together they too went on to the church.

"Father, ought we not to go on at once to Ethelberta's, instead of waiting?" said Sol, on reaching the vestry. "'Twas no use coming in here."

"No use at all," said Chickereel, as if he had straw in his throat. "Look at this. I would almost sooner have had it that in leaving this

church I came from her grave—well, no; perhaps not that, but I fear it is a bad thing!"

Sol then saw the names in the register, Christopher saw them, and the man closed the book. Christopher could not well command himself, and he retired.

"I knew it. I always said that pride would lead Berta to marry an unworthy man, and so it has!" said Sol, bitterly. What shall we do now? I'll see her."

"Do no such thing, young man," said Mountclere. "The best course is to leave matters alone. They are married. If you are wise, you will try to think the match a good one, and be content to let her keep her position without inconveniencing her by your intrusions or complaints. It is possible that the satisfaction of her ambition will help her to endure any few surprises to her propriety that may occur. She is a clever young woman, and has played her cards adroitly. I only hope she may never repent of the game. A-hem. Good morning." Saying this, Mountclere slightly bowed to his relations, and marched out of the church with dignity; but it was told afterwards by the coachman, who had no love for Mountclere, that when he stepped into the fly, and was as he believed unobserved, he was quite overcome with fatuous rage, his lips frothing like a mug of hot ale.

"What an impertinent gentleman 'tis," said Chickerel. "As if we had tried for her to marry his brother!"

"He knows better than that," said Sol. "But he'll never believe that Berta didn't lay a trap for the old fellow. He thinks at this moment that Lord Mountclere has never been told of us, and of our belongings."

"I wonder if she has deceived him in anything," murmured Chickerel. "I can hardly suppose it. But she is altogether beyond me. However, if she has misled him on any point she will suffer for it."

"You need not fear that, father. It isn't her way of working. Why couldn't we have been sooner? Why couldn't she have known that when a title is to be had for the asking, the owner must be a shocking one indeed? D—the title!"

"The title is well enough. Any poor scrubs in our place must be fools not to think the match a very rare and astonishing honour, as far as the position goes. But that my brave girl will be miserable is a part of the honour I can't stomach so well. If he had been any other peer in the kingdom, we might have been merry indeed. I believe he'll ruin her happiness—yes, I do—not by any personal injury or rough conduct, but by causing her to be despised; and that is a thing she can't endure."

"She's not to be despised without a deal of trouble—we must remember that. And if he insults her by introducing new favourites, as they say he did his first wife, I'll call upon him and ask his meaning, and take her away."

Then the young men parted, and half-an-hour later the ingenuous Ladywell came from the visitors' inn by the shore, a man walking behind him with a quantity of artists' materials and appliances. He went on board the steamer, which this morning had performed the passage in safety. Ethelberta single having been the loadstone in the cliffs that had attracted Ladywell hither, Ethelberta married was a negative which sent him away. And thus did a woman put an end to the only opportunity of distinction, on exhibition walls, that ever offered itself to the tortuous ways, quaint alleys, and marbled bluffs of Knollsea, as accessories in the picture of a winter sea.

Christopher's interest in the village was of the same evaporating nature. He looked upon the sea, and the great swell, and the waves sending up a sound like the huzzas of multitudes, but all the wild scene was irksome now. The ocean-bound steamers far away on the horizon inspired him with no curiosity as to their destination; the house Ethelberta had occupied was positively hateful; and he turned away to wait impatiently for the hour at which he had promised to drive on to meet Sol at Coomb.

Sol and Chickereel plodded along the road, in order to skirt Lychworth before the carrier came up. Reaching the top of a hill on their way, they paused to look down on a peaceful scene. It was a park and wood, glowing in all the matchless colours of late autumn, parapets and pediments peering out from a central position afar. At the bottom of the descent before them was a lodge, to which they now descended. The gate stood invitingly open. Exclusiveness was no part of the owner's instincts; one could see that at a glance. No appearance of a well-rolled garden-path attached to the park-drive, as is the case with many, betokening by the perfection of their surfaces their proprietor's deficiency in hospitality. The approach was like a turnpike-road, full of great ruts, clumsy mendings, bordered by trampled edges and incursions upon the grass at pleasure. Butchers and bakers drove as freely herein as jockeys and peeresses. Christening parties, wedding companies, and funeral trains, passed along by the doors of the mansion without check or question. A wild untidiness in this particular has its recommendations; for guarded grounds ever convey a suspicion that their owner is young to landed possessions, as religious earnestness implies newness of conversion, and conjugal tenderness recent marriage.

Half-an-hour being wanting as yet to Chickereel's time with the carrier, Sol and himself, like the rest of the world when at leisure, walked into the extensive stretch of grass and grove. It formed a park so large that not one of its owners had ever wished it larger, not one of its owners' rivals had ever failed to wish it smaller, and not one of its owners' satellites had ever seen it without praise. They somewhat avoided the roadway, passing under the huge, misshapen, ragged trees, and through fern brakes, ruddy and crisp in their decay. On reaching a suitable eminence, the father and son stood still to look upon the many-chimned

building, or rather conglomeration of buildings, to which these groves and glades formed a setting.

"We will just give a glance," said Chickereel, "and then go away. It does not seem well to me that Ethelberta should have this; it is too much. The sudden change will do her no good. I never believe in anything that comes in the shape of wonderful luck. As it comes, so it goes. Had she been brought home to-day to one of those tenant-farms instead of these woods and walls, I could have called it good fortune. What she should have done was glorify herself by glorifying her own line of life, not by forsaking that line for another. Better have been admired as a governess than shunned as a peeress, which is what she will be. But it is just the same everywhere in these days. Young men will rather wear a black coat and starve than wear fustian and do well."

"One man to want such a monstrous house as that! well, 'tis a fine place. See, there's the carpenters' shops, the timber-yard, and everything, as if it were a little town. Perhaps Berta may hire me for a job now and then."

"I always knew she would cut herself off from us. She marked for it from childhood, and she has finished the business thoroughly."

"Well, it is no matter, father, for why should we want to trouble her? She may write, and I shall answer; but if she calls to see me, I shall not return the visit; and if she meets me with her husband or any of her new society about her, I shall behave as a stranger."

"It will be best," said Chickereel. "Well, now, I must move."

However, by the sorcery of accident, before they had very far retraced their steps an open carriage became visible round a bend in the drive. Chickereel, with a servant's instinct, was for beating a retreat.

"No," said Sol. "Let us stand our ground. We have already been seen, and we do no harm."

So they stood still on the edge of the drive, and the carriage drew near. It was a landau, and the sun shone in upon Lord Mountclere, with Lady Mountclere sitting beside him, like Abishag beside King David.

Very blithe looked the viscount, for he rode upon a cherub to-day. She appeared fresh, rosy, and strong, but dubious; though if mien was anything, she was a viscountess twice over. Her dress was of a dove-coloured material, with a bonnet to match, a little tufted white feather resting on the top, like a truce-flag between the blood of noble and vassal. Upon the cool grey of her dress hung a few locks of hair, toned warm as fire by the sunshiny addition to its natural hue.

Chickereel instinctively took off his hat; Sol did the same.

For only a moment did Ethelberta seem uncertain how to act. But a solution to her difficulty was given by the face of her brother. There she saw plainly at one glance more than a dozen speeches would have told; for Sol's features thoroughly expressed his intention that to him she was

to be a stranger. Her eyes flew to Chickerele, and he slightly shook his head. She understood them now. With a tear in her eye for her father, and a sigh in her bosom for Sol, she bowed in answer to their salute; her husband moved his hat and nodded, and the carriage rolled on. Lord Mountclere might possibly be making use of the fine morning by showing her the park and premises. Chickerele, with a moist eye, now went on with his son towards the high road. When they reached the lodge, the lodge-keeper was walking in the sun, smoking his pipe. "Good morning," he said to Chickerele.

"Any rejoicings at the Court to-day?" the butler inquired.

"Quite the reverse. Not a soul there. 'Tisn't knowed anywhere at all. I had no idea of such a thing till he brought my lady home. Not going off, neither. They've come home like the commonest couple in the land, and not even the bells allowed to ring."

They walked along the public road, and the carrier came in view.

"Father," said Sol, "I don't think I'll get up with you. She's gone into the house; and suppose she should run out without him to try to find us? It would be cruel to disappoint her. I'll bide about here for a quarter of an hour, in case she should."

"Well, one or two of her old ways may be left in her still, and it is not a bad thought. Then you will walk the rest of the distance if you don't meet with Mr. Julian? I must be in London by the evening."

"Any time to-night will do for me. I shall not begin work again until to-morrow, so that the four-o'clock train will answer my purpose."

Thus they parted, and Sol strolled leisurely back. The road was quite deserted, and he lingered by the park fence.

"Sol!" said a bird-like voice; "how did you come here?"

He looked up, and saw a figure peering down upon him from the top of the park wall, the ground on the inside being higher than the road. The speaker was to the expected Ethelberta what the moon is to the sun, a star to the moon. It was Picotee.

"Hullo, Picotee!" said Sol.

"There's a little gate a quarter of a mile farther on," said Picotee. "We can meet there without your passing through the big lodge. I'll be there as soon as you."

Sol ascended the hill, passed through the second gate, and turned back again, when he met Picotee coming forward under the trees. They walked together in this secluded spot.

"Berta says she wants to see you and father," said Picotee, breathlessly. "You must come in and make yourselves comfortable. She had no idea you were here so secretly, and she didn't know what to do."

"Father's gone," said Sol.

"How vexed she will be! She thinks there is something the matter—that you are angry with her for not telling you earlier. But you will come in, Sol?"

"No, I can't come in," said her brother.

"Why not? It is such a big house, you can't think. You need not come near the front apartments, if you think we shall be ashamed of you in your working-clothes. How came you not to dress up a bit, Sol? Still, Berta won't mind it much. She says Lord Mountclere must take her as she is, or he is kindly welcome to leave her."

"Ah, well! I might have had a word or two to say about that, but the time has gone by for it, worse luck. Perhaps it is best that I have said nothing, and she has had her way. No, I shan't come in, Picotee. Father is gone, and I am going too."

"Oh, Sol!"

"We are rather put out at her acting like this—father and I and all of us. She might have let us know about it beforehand, even if she is a lady and we what we always was. It wouldn't have let her down so terrible much to write a line. She might have learnt something that would have led her to take a different step."

"But you will see poor Berta? She has done no harm. She was going to write long letters to all of you to-day, explaining her wedding, and how she is going to help us all on in the world."

Sol paused irresolutely. "No, I won't come in," he said. "It would disgrace her, for one thing, dressed as I be; more than that, I don't want to come in. But I should like to see her, if she would like to see me; and I'll go up there to that little fir plantation, and walk up and down behind it for exactly half-an-hour. She can come out to me there." Sol had pointed as he spoke to a knot of young trees that hooded a knoll a little way off.

"I'll go and tell her," said Picotee.

"I suppose they will be off somewhere, and she is busy getting ready?"

"Oh no. They are not going to travel till next year. Ethelberta does not want to go anywhere; and Lord Mountclere cannot endure this changeable weather in any place but his own house."

"Poor fellow!"

"Then you will wait for her by the firs? I'll tell her at once."

Picotee left him, and Sol went across the glade.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

LYCHWORTH (*continued*).—THE ANGLEBURY HIGHWAY.

HE had not paced behind the firs more than ten minutes when Ethelberta appeared from the opposite side. At great inconvenience to herself, she had complied with his request.

Ethelberta was trembling. She took her brother's hand, and said, "Is father, then, gone?"

"Yes," said Sol. "I should have been gone likewise, but I thought you wanted to see me."

"Of course I did, and him too. Why did you come so mysteriously, and, I must say, unbecomingly? I am afraid I did wrong in not informing you of my intention."

"To yourself you may have. Father would have liked a word with you before—you did it."

"You both looked so forbidding that I did not like to stop the carriage when we passed you. I want to see him on an important matter—his leaving Mrs. Doncastle's service at once. I am going to write and beg her to dispense with a notice, which I have no doubt she will do."

"He's very much upset about you."

"My secrecy was perhaps an error of judgment," she said sadly. "But I had reasons. Why did you and my father come here at all if you did not want to see me?"

"We did want to see you—up to a certain time."

"You did not come to prevent my marriage?"

"We wished to see you before the marriage—I can't say more."

"I thought you might not approve of what I had done," said Ethelberta, mournfully. "But a time may come when you will approve."

"Never."

"Don't be harsh, Sol. A coronet covers a multitude of sins."

"A coronet: good Lord—and you my sister! Look at my hand." Sol extended his hand. "Look how my thumb stands out at the root, as if it were out of joint, and that hard place inside there. Did you ever see anything so ugly as that hand—a misshaped monster, isn't he? That comes from the jack-plane, and my pushing against it day after day and year after year. If I were found drowned or buried, dressed or undressed, in fustian or in broadcloth, folk would look at my hand and say, 'That man's a carpenter.' Well now, how can a man, branded with work as I be, be brother to a viscountess without something being wrong? Of course there's something wrong in it, or he wouldn't have married you—something which won't be righted without terrible suffering."

"No, no," said she. "You are mistaken. There is no such wonderful quality in a title in these days. What I really am is second wife to a quiet old country nobleman, who has given up society. What more commonplace? My life will be as simple, even more simple, than it was before."

"Berta, you have worked to false lines. A creeping up among the useless lumber of our nation that'll be the first to burn up if there comes a flare. I never see such a deserter of your own lot as you be! But you were always like it, Berta, and I am ashamed of ye. More than that, a good woman never marries twice."

"You are too hard, Sol," said the poor viscountess, almost crying. "I've done it all for you! Even if I have made a mistake, and given my ambition an ignoble turn, don't tell me so now; or you may do more

harm in a minute than you will cure in a lifetime. It is absurd to let republican passions so blind you to fact. A family which can be honourably traced through history for five hundred years does affect the heart of a person not entirely hardened against romance. Whether you like the peerage or no, they appeal to our historical sense and love of old associations."

"I don't care for history. Prophecy is the only thing can do poor men any good. When you were a girl, you wouldn't drop a curtsy to 'em, historical or otherwise, and there you were right. But, instead of sticking to such principles, you must needs push up, so as to get girls such as you were once to curtsy to you, not even thinking marriage with a bad man too great a price to pay for't."

"A bad man? What do you mean by that? Lord Mountclere is rather old, but he's worthy. What did you mean, Sol?"

"Nothing—a mere expression."

At that moment Picotee emerged from a tree, and told her sister that Lord Mountclere was looking for her.

"Well, Sol, I cannot explain all to you now," she said. "I will send for you in London." She wished him good-by, and they separated, Picotee accompanying Sol a little on his way.

Ethelberta was greatly perturbed by this meeting. After retracing her steps a short distance, she still felt so distressed and unrepresentable, that she resolved not to allow Lord Mountclere to see her till the clouds had somewhat passed off; it was but a bare act of justice to him to hide from his sight such a bridal mood as this. It was better to keep him waiting than to make him positively unhappy. She turned aside, and went up the valley, where the park merged in miles of wood and copse.

She opened an iron gate and entered the wood, casually interested in the vast variety of colours that the half-fallen leaves of this season wore: more, much more, occupied with personal thought. The path she pursued became gradually involved in bushes as well as trees, giving to the spot the character rather of a coppice than a wood. Perceiving that she had gone far enough, Ethelberta turned back by a path which at this point intersected that by which she had approached, and promised a more direct return towards the Court. She had not gone many steps among the hazels, which here formed a perfect thicket, when she observed a belt of holly-bushes in their midst; towards the outskirts of these an opening on her left hand directly led, thence winding round into a clear space of greensward, which they completely enclosed. On this isolated and mowed-up bit of lawn stood a timber-built cottage, having ornamental barge-boards, balconettes, and porch; it was an object interesting as an experiment, and grand as a toy, but as a building contemptible. A blue gauze of smoke floated over the chimney, as if somebody was living there; round towards the side some empty hen-coops were piled away; while under the hollies were divers erections of wire netting and sticks, showing that birds were kept here at some seasons of the year.

Being lady of all she surveyed, Ethelberta crossed the leafy sward, and knocked at the door. She was interested in knowing the purpose of the peculiar little edifice.

The door was opened by a woman wearing a clean apron upon a not very clean gown. Ethelberta asked who lived in so pretty a place.

"Miss Gruchette," the servant replied. "But she is not here now."

"Does she live here alone?"

"Yes—excepting myself and a fellow-servant."

"Oh."

"She lives here to attend to the pheasants and poultry, because she is so clever in managing them. They are brought here from the keeper's over the hill. Her father was a fancier."

"Miss Gruchette attends to the birds, and two servants attend to Miss Gruchette?"

"Well, to tell the truth, m'm, the servants do most of all of it. Still, that's what Miss Gruchette is here for. Would you like to see the house? it is pretty." The woman spoke with hesitation, as if in doubt between the desire of earning a shilling and the fear that Ethelberta was not a stranger. That Ethelberta was Lady Mountclere she plainly did not dream.

"I fear I can scarcely stay long enough; yet I will just look in," said Ethelberta. And as soon as they had crossed the threshold she was glad of having done so.

The cottage internally may be described as a sort of boudoir extracted from the bulk of a mansion and deposited in a wood. The front room was filled with nicknacks, curious work-tables, filigree baskets, twisted brackets supporting statuettes, in which the grotesque in every case ruled the design; love-birds, in gilt cages; French bronzes, wonderful boxes, needlework of strange patterns, and other attractive objects. The apartment was one of those which seem to laugh in a visitor's face, and on closer examination express frivolity more distinctly than by words.

"Miss Gruchette is here to keep the fowls?" said Ethelberta in a puzzled tone, after a survey.

"Yes. But they don't keep her."

Ethelberta did not attempt to understand, and ceased to occupy her mind with the matter. They came from the cottage to the door, where she gave the woman a trifle, and turned to leave. But footsteps were at that moment to be heard beating among the leaves on the other side of the hollies, and Ethelberta waited till the walkers should have passed. The voices of two men reached herself and the woman as they stood. They were close to the house, yet screened from it by the holly-bushes, when one could be heard to say distinctly, as if with his face turned to the cottage—

"Lady Mountclere gone for good?"

"I suppose so. Ha-ha! So come, so go."

The speakers passed on, their backs becoming visible through the opening. They appeared to be woodmen.

"What Lady Mountclere do they mean?" said Ethelberta.

The woman blushed. "They meant Miss Gruchette."

"Oh—a nickname."

"Yes."

"Why?"

The woman whispered why in a story of about two minutes' length. Ethelberta turned pale.

"Is she going to return?" she inquired in a thin hard voice.

"Yes; next week. You know her, m'm?"

"No. I am a stranger."

"So much the better. I may tell you, then, that an odd tale is flying about the neighbourhood—that Lord Mountclere was privately married to another woman, at Knollsea, this morning early. Can it be true?"

"I believe it to be true."

"And that she's of no family?"

"Of no family."

"Indeed. Then the Lord only knows what will become of the poor thing. There will be murder between 'em!"

"Between whom?"

"Her and the lady who lives here. She won't budge an inch—not she!"

Ethelberta moved aside. A shade seemed to overspread the world, the sky, the trees, and the objects in the foreground. She kept her face away from the woman, and whispering a reply to her Good-morning, passed through the hollies into the leaf-strewn path. As soon as she came to a large trunk she placed her hands against it and rested her face upon them. She drew herself lower down, lower, lower, till she crouched upon the leaves. "Ay—'tis what father and Sol meant. Oh, heaven!" she whispered.

She soon arose, and went on her way to the house. Her fair features were firmly set, and she scarcely heeded the path in the concentration which had followed her paroxysm. When she reached the park proper she became aware of an excitement that was in progress there.

Ethelberta's absence had become unaccountable to Lord Mountclere, who could hardly permit her retirement from his sight for a minute. But at first he had made due allowance for her eccentricity as a woman of genius, and would not take notice of the half-hour's desertion, unpardonable as it might have been in other classes of wives. Then he had inquired, searched, been alarmed: he had finally sent men-servants in all directions about the park to look for her. He feared she had fallen out of a window, down a well, or into the lake. The next stage of search was to have been drags and grapnels; but Ethelberta entered the house.

Lord Mountclere rushed forward to meet her, and such was her contrivance that he noticed no change. The searchers were called in,

Ethelberta explaining that she had merely obeyed the wish of her brother in going out to meet him. Picotee, who had returned from her walk with Sol, was upstairs in one of the rooms which had been allotted to her. Ethelberta managed to run in there on her way upstairs to her own chamber.

"Picotee, put your things on again," she said. "You are the only friend I have in this house, and I want one badly. Go to Sol, and deliver this message to him—that I want to see him at once. You must overtake him, if you walk all the way to Anglebury. But the train does not leave till four, so that there is plenty of time."

"What is the matter?" said Picotee. "I cannot walk all the way."

"I don't think you will have to do that—I hope not."

"He is going to stop at Coomb to have a bit of lunch: I might overtake him there."

"Yes. And tell him to come to the east passage door. It is that door next to the entrance to the stable-yard. There is a little yew-tree outside it. On second thoughts you, dear, must not come back. Wait at Coomb in the little inn parlour till Sol comes to you again. You will probably then have to go home to London alone; but do not mind it. The worst part for you will be in going from the station to the Crescent; but nobody will molest you in a four-wheel cab: you have done it before. However, he will tell you if this is necessary when he gets back. I can best fight my battles alone. You shall have a letter from me the day after to-morrow, stating where I am. I shall not be here."

"But what is it so dreadful?"

"Nothing to frighten you." But she spoke with a breathlessness that completely nullified the assurance. "It is merely that I find I must come to an explanation with Lord Mountelere before I can live here permanently, and I cannot stipulate with him while I am here in his power. Till I write, good-by. Your things are not unpacked, so let them remain here for the present—they can be sent for."

Poor Picotee, more agitated than her sister, but never questioning her orders, went downstairs and out of the house. She ran across the shrubberies, into the park, and to the gate whereby Sol had emerged some half-hour earlier. She trotted along upon the turnpike-road like a lost doe, crying as she went at the new trouble which had come upon Berta, whatever that trouble might be. Behind her she heard wheels and the stepping of a horse, but she was too concerned to turn her head. The pace of the vehicle slackened, however, when it was abreast of Picotee, and she looked up to see Christopher as the driver.

"Miss Chickere!," he said, with surprise.

Picotee had quickly looked down again, and she murmured, "Yes."

Christopher asked, what he could not help asking under the circumstances, "Would you like to ride?"

"I should be glad," said she, overcoming her flurry. "I am anxious to overtake my brother Sol."

"I have arranged to pick him up at Coomb," said Christopher.

He descended, assisted her to mount beside him, and drove on again, almost in silence. He was inclined to believe that some supernatural legerdemain had to do with these periodic impacts of Picotee on his path. She sat mute and melancholy till they were within half a mile of Coomb.

"Thank you," she said then, perceiving Sol upon the road. "There is my brother: I will get down now."

"He was going to ride on to Anglebury with me," said Julian.

Picotee did not reply, and Sol turned round. Seeing her he instantly exclaimed, "What's the matter, Picotee?"

She explained to him that he was to go back immediately, and meet her sister at the door by the yew, as Ethelberta had charged her. Christopher, knowing them so well, was too much an interested member of the group to be left out of confidence, and she included him in her audience.

"And what are you to do?" said Sol to her.

"I am to wait at Coomb till you come to me."

"I can't understand it," Sol muttered, with a gloomy face. "There's something wrong; and it was only to be expected; that's what I say, Mr. Julian."

"If necessary I can take care of Miss Chickerel till you come," said Christopher.

"Thank you," said Sol. "Then I will return to you as soon as I can, at the Castle Inn, just ahead. 'Tis very awkward for you to be so burdened by us, Mr. Julian; but we are in a trouble that I don't yet see the bottom of."

"I know," said Christopher, kindly. "We will wait for you."

He then drove on with Picotee to the inn, which was not far off, and Sol returned again to Lychworth. Feeling somewhat like a thief in the night, he zigzagged through the park, behind belts and knots of trees, until he saw the yew, dark and clear, as if drawn in ink upon the fair face of the mansion. The way up to it was in a little cutting between shrubs, the door being a private entrance, sunk below the surface of the lawn, and invisible from other parts of the same front. As soon as he reached it, Ethelberta opened it at once, as if she had listened for his footsteps.

She took him along a passage in the basement, up a flight of steps, and into a huge, solitary, chill apartment. It was the ball-room. Spacious mirrors in gilt frames formed panels in the lower part of the walls, the remainder being toned in sage-green. In a recess between each mirror was a statue. The ceiling rose in a segmental curve, and bore sprawling upon its face gilt figures of wanton goddesses, cupids, satyrs with tambourines, drums, and trumpets, the whole ceiling seeming alive with them. But the room was very gloomy now, there being little light admitted from without, and the reflections from the mirrors gave

a depressing coldness to the scene. It was a place intended to look joyous by night, and whatever it chose to look by day.

"We are safe here," said she. "But we must listen for footsteps. I have only five minutes: Lord Mountclere is waiting for me. I mean to leave this place, come what may."

"Why?" said Sol, in astonishment.

"I cannot tell you—something has occurred. God has got me in his power at last, and is going to scourge me for my bad doings—that's what it seems like. Sol, listen to me, and do exactly what I say. Go to Anglebury, hire a brougham, bring it on as far as Lower Lychworth: you will have to meet me with it at one of the park gates later in the evening—probably the west, at half-past seven. Leave it at the village with the man, come on here on foot, and stay under the trees till just before six: it will then be quite dark, and you must stand under the projecting balustrade a little further on than the door you came in by. I will just step upon the balcony over it, and tell you more exactly than I can now the precise time that I shall be able to slip out, and where the carriage is to be waiting. But it may not be safe to speak on account of his closeness to me—I will hand down a note. I find it is impossible to leave the house by daylight—I am certain to be pursued—he already suspects something. Now I must be going, or he will be here, for he watches my movements because of some accidental words that escaped me."

"Berta, I sha'n't have anything to do with this," said Sol. "It is not right!"

"I am only going to Rouen, to Aunt Charlotte!" she implored. "I want to get to Southampton, to be in time for the midnight steamer. When I am at Rouen I can negotiate with Lord Mountclere the terms on which I will return to him. It is the only chance I have of rooting out a scandal and a disgrace which threatens the beginning of my life here! My letters to him, and his to me, can be forwarded through you or through father, and he will not know where I am. Any woman is justified in adopting such a course to bring her husband to a sense of her dignity. If I don't go away now, it will end in a permanent separation. If I leave at once, and stipulate that he gets rid of her, we may be reconciled."

"I can't help you: you must stick to your husband. I don't like them, or any of their sort, barring about three or four, for the reason that they despise me, and all my sort. But, Ethelberta, for all that, I'll play fair with them. No half-and-half trimming business. You have joined 'em, and 'rayed yourself against us; and there you'd better bide. You have married your man, and your duty is towards him. I know what he is, and so does father; but if I were to help you to run away now, I should scorn myself more than I scorn him."

"I don't care for that, or for any such politics! The Mountclere line is noble, and how was I to know that this member was not noble,

too? As the representative of an illustrious family I was taken with him, but as a man—I must shun him."

"How can you shun him? You have married him!"

"Nevertheless I won't stay. Neither law nor gospel demands it of me after what I have learnt. And if law and gospel did demand it, I would not stay. And if you will not help me to escape, I go alone."

"You had better not try any such wild thing."

The creaking of a door was heard. "Oh, Sol," she said, appealingly, "don't go into the question whether I am right or wrong—only remember that I am very unhappy. Do help me—I have no other person in the world to ask! Be under the balcony at six o'clock. Say you will—I must go—say you will!"

"I'll think," said Sol, very much disturbed. "There, don't cry; I'll try to be under the balcony, at any rate. I cannot promise more, but I'll try to be there."

She opened in the panelling one of the old-fashioned concealed modes of exit known as jib-doors, which it was once the custom to construct without architraves in the walls of large apartments, so as not to interfere with the general design of the room. Sol found himself in a narrow passage, running down the whole length of the ball-room, and at the same time he heard Lord Mountclere's voice within, arguing with Ethelberta. His escape must have been marvellous: as it was the viscount might have seen her tears. He passed down some steps, along an area from which he could see into a row of servants' offices, among them a kitchen with a fireplace flaming like an altar of sacrifice. Nobody seemed to be concerned about him; there were workmen upon the premises, and he nearly matched them. At last he got again into the shrubberies, and to the side of the park by which he had entered.

On reaching Coomb he found Picotee in the parlour of the little inn, as he had directed. Mr. Julian, she said, had walked up to the ruins, and would be back again in a few minutes. Sol ordered the horse to be put in, and by the time it was ready Christopher came down from the hill. Room was made for Sol by opening the flap of the dog-cart, and Christopher drove on.

He was anxious to know the trouble, and Sol was not reluctant to share the burden of it with one whom he believed to be a friend. He told, scrap by scrap, the strange request of Ethelberta. Christopher, though ignorant of Ethelberta's experience that morning, instantly assumed that the discovery of some concealed spectre had led to this precipitancy.

"When does she wish you to meet her with the carriage?"

"Probably at half-past seven, at the west lodge; but that is to be finally fixed by a note she will hand down to me from the balcony."

"Which balcony?"

"The nearest to the yew-tree."

"At what time will she hand the note?"

"As the court clock strikes six, she says. And if I am not there to take her instructions of course she will give up the idea, which is just what I want her to do."

Christopher begged Sol to go. Whether Ethelberta was right or wrong, he did not stop to inquire. She was in trouble; she was too clear-headed to be in trouble without good reason; and she wanted assistance out of it. But such was Sol's nature that the more he reflected the more determined was he in not giving way to her entreaty. By the time that they reached Anglebury he repented having given way so far as to withhold a direct refusal.

"It can do no good," he said, mournfully. "It is better to nip her notion in its beginning. She says she wants to fly to Rouen, and from there arrange terms with him. But it can't be done—she should have thought of terms before."

Christopher made no further reply. Leaving word at the Old Fox that a man was to be sent to take the horse of him, he drove directly onwards to the station.

"Then you don't mean to help her?" said Julian, when Sol took the tickets—one for himself, and one for Picotee.

"I serve her best by leaving her alone," said Sol.

"I don't think so."

"She has married him."

"She is in distress."

"She has married him."

Sol and Picotee took their seats, Picotee upbraiding her brother. "I can go by myself!" she said, in tears, "Do go back for Berta, Sol. She said I was to go home alone, and I can do it."

"You must not. It is not right for you to be hiring cabs and driving across London at midnight. Bertie should have known better than propose it."

"She was flurried. Go, Sol!"

But her entreaty was fruitless.

"Have you got your ticket, Mr. Julian?" said Sol. "I suppose we shall go together till we get near Melchester?"

"I have not got my ticket yet—I'll be back in two minutes."

The minutes went by, and Christopher did not reappear. The train moved off: Christopher was seen running up the platform, as if in a vain hope to catch it.

"He has missed the train," said Sol. Picotee looked disappointed, and said nothing. They were soon out of sight.

"God forgive me for such a hollow pretence!" said Christopher to himself. "But he would have been uneasy had he known I wished to stay behind. I cannot leave her in trouble like this!"

He went back to the Old Fox with the manner and movement of a man who after a lifetime of desultoriness had at last found something to do. It was now getting late in the afternoon. Christopher ordered a

one-horse brougham at the inn, and entering it was driven out of the town towards Lychworth as the evening shades were beginning to fall. They passed into the village of Lower Lychworth at half-past five, and drew up at a beer-house at the end. Jumping out here, Julian told the man to wait till he should return.

Thus far he had exactly obeyed her orders to Sol. He hoped to be able to obey them throughout, and supply her with the aid her brother refused. He also hoped that the change in the personality of her confederate would make no difference to her intention. That he was putting himself in a wrong position he allowed, but time and attention were requisite for such analyses: meanwhile Ethelberta was in trouble. On the one hand, there was she waiting hopefully for Sol; on the other, there was Sol many miles on his way to town; between them was himself.

He ran with all his might towards Lychworth Park, mounted the lofty stone steps by the lodge, saw the dark bronze figures on the piers through the twilight, and then proceeded to thread the trees. Among these he struck a light for a moment: it was ten minutes to six. In another five minutes he was panting beneath the walls of her house.

Lychworth Court was not unknown to Christopher, for he had frequently explored that spot in his Sandbourne days. He perceived now why she had selected that particular balcony for handing down directions: it was the only one round the house that was low enough to be reached from the outside, the basement here being a little way sunk in the ground.

Thus he waited. About a foot over his head was the stone floor of the balcony, forming a ceiling to his position. At his back, two or three feet behind, was a blank wall—the wall of the house. In front of him was the misty park, crowned by a sky sparkling with winter stars. This was abruptly cut off upward by the dark edge of the balcony which overhung him.

It was as if some person within the room above had been awaiting his approach. He had scarcely found time to observe his situation when a human hand and portion of a bare arm were thrust between the balusters, descended a little way from the edge of the balcony, and remained hanging across the starlit sky. Something was between the fingers. Christopher lifted his hand, took the scrap, which was paper, and the arm was withdrawn. As it withdrew, a jewel on one of the fingers sparkled in the rays of a large planet that rode in the opposite sky.

Light steps retreated from the balcony, and a window closed. Christopher had almost held his breath lest Ethelberta should discover him at the critical moment to be other than Sol, and mar her deliverance by her alarm. The still silence was anything but silence to him; he felt as if he had been listening to the clanging chorus of an oratorio. And then he could fancy he heard words between Ethelberta and the viscount within the room; they were evidently at very close quarters, and

dexterity had been required. He went on tip-toe across the gravel to the grass, and once on that he strode in the direction whence he had come. By the thick trunk of one of a group of aged trees he stopped to get a light, just as the court-clock struck six in loud long clangs. The transaction had been carried out, through her impatience possibly, four or five minutes before the time appointed.

The note contained, in a shaken hand, in which, however, the well-known characters were distinguishable, these words in pencil :

"At half-past seven o'clock. Just outside the north lodge ; don't fail."

This was the time she had suggested to Sol as that which would probably best suit her escape, if she could escape at all. She had changed the place from the west to the north lodge—nothing else. The latter was certainly more secluded, though a trifle more remote from the course of the proposed journey ; there was just time enough and none to spare for fetching the brougham from Lower Lychworth to the lodge, the village being two miles off. The few minutes gained by her readiness at the balcony were useful now. He started at once for the village, diverging somewhat to observe the spot appointed for the meeting. It was excellently chosen ; the gate appeared to be little used, the lane outside it was covered with trees, and all around was silent as the grave. After this hasty survey by the wan starlight, he hastened on to Lower Lychworth.

An hour and a quarter later a little brougham without lamps was creeping along by the park wall towards this spot. The leaves were so thick upon the unfrequented road that the wheels could not be heard, and the horse's pacing made scarcely more noise than a rabbit would have done in limping along. The vehicle progressed slowly, for they were in good time. About ten yards from the park entrance it stopped, and Christopher stepped out.

"We may have to wait here ten minutes," he said to the driver. "And then shall we able to reach Anglebury in time for the up-mail train to Southampton ?"

"Half-past seven, half-past eight, half-past nine—two hours. Oh yes, sir, easily. A young lady in the case perhaps, sir ?"

"Yes."

"Well, I hope she'll be done honestly by, even if she is of humble station. 'Tis best, and cheapest too, in the long run." The coachman was apparently imagining the dove about to flit away to be one of the pretty maid-servants that abounded in Lychworth Court ; such escapades as these were not infrequent among them, a fair face having been deemed a sufficient recommendation, without too close an inquiry into character, since the death of the first viscountess.

"Now then, silence ; and listen for a footstep at the gate."

Such calmness as there was in the musician's voice had been produced by considerable effort. For his heart had begun to beat fast and loud as

he strained his attentive ear to catch the footfall of a woman who could never be his.

The obscurity was as great as a starry sky would permit it to be. Beneath the trees where the carriage stood the darkness was total.

CHAPTER XLIX.

LYCHWORTH AND ITS PRECINCTS.—MELCHESTER.

To be wise after the event is often to act foolishly with regard to it; and to preserve the illusion which has led to the event would frequently be a course that omniscience itself could not find fault with. Reaction with Ethelberta was complete, and the more violent in that it threatened to be useless. Sol's bitter chiding had been the first thing to discompose her fortitude. It reduced her to a consciousness that she had allowed herself to be coerced in her instincts without triumphing in her duty. She might have pleased her family better by pleasing her tastes, and have entirely avoided the grim irony of the situation disclosed later in the day.

After the second interview with Sol she was to some extent composed in mind by being able to nurse a definite intention. As momentum causes the narrowest wheel to stand upright, the poorest scheme, fairly launched, will give power to maintain a position stoically.

In the temporary absence of Lord Mountclere, about six o'clock, she slipped out upon the balcony and handed down a note. The hour and a half wanting to half-past seven she passed with great effort. The greater part of the time was occupied by dinner, during which she attempted to devise some scheme for leaving him without suspicion just before the appointed moment. Happily, and as if by a Providence, there was no necessity for any such thing. A little while before the half-hour, when she moved to rise from dinner, he also arose, begging her to excuse him for a few minutes, that he might go and write an important note to his lawyer, until that moment forgotten, though the postman was nearly due. She heard him retire along the corridor and shut himself into his study, his promised time of return being a quarter of an hour thence.

Five minutes after that memorable parting Ethelberta came from the little door by the bush of yew, well and thickly wrapped up from head to heels. She skimmed across the park and under the boughs like a shade, mounting then the stone steps for pedestrians which were fixed beside the park gates here, as at all the lodges. Outside and below her she saw an oblong shape—it was a brougham, and it had been drawn forward close to the bottom of the steps that she might not have an inch further to go on foot than to this barrier. The whole precinct was overhung with trees; half their foliage being over head, the other half under foot, for the gardeners had not yet begun to rake and collect the leaves; thus it was that her dress rustled as she descended the steps.

The carriage door was held open by the driver, and she entered instantly. He shut her in, and mounted to his seat. As they drove away she became conscious of another person inside.

"Oh! Sol—it is done!" she whispered, believing the man to be her brother. Her companion made no reply.

Ethelberta, familiar with Sol's moods of troubled silence, did not press for an answer. It was, indeed, certain that Sol's assistance would have been given under a sullen protest; even if unwilling to disappoint her, he might well have been silent and angry at her course. They sat in silence, and in total darkness. The road ascended an incline, the horse's feet being still deadened by the carpet of leaves. Then the large trees on either hand became interspersed by a low brushwood of varied sorts, from which a large bird occasionally flew, in its affright at their presence beating its wings recklessly against the hard stems with force enough to cripple the delicate quills. It showed how deserted was the spot after nightfall.

"Sol?" said Ethelberta again. "Why not talk to me?"

She now noticed that her fellow-traveller kept his head and his whole person as snugly back in the corner, out of her way, as it was possible to do. She was not exactly frightened, but she could not understand the reason. The carriage gave a quick turn, and stopped.

"Where are we now?" she said. "Shall we get to Anglebury by nine? What is the time, Sol?"

"I will see," replied her companion. They were the first words he had uttered.

The voice was so different from her brother's that she was terrified; her limbs quivered. In another instant the speaker had struck a wax vesta, and holding it erect in his fingers he looked her in the face.

"Hee-hee-hee!" The laughter was her husband the viscount!

He laughed again, and his eyes gleamed like a couple of tarnished brass buttons in the light of the wax match.

Ethelberta might have fallen dead with the shock, so terrible and hideous was it. Yet she did not. She neither shrieked nor fainted; but no poor January fieldfare was ever colder, no ice-house ever more dank with perspiration, than she was then.

"A very pleasant joke, my dear—hee-hee! And no more than was to be expected on this merry happy day of our lives. Nobody enjoys a good jest more than I do: I always enjoyed a jest—hee-hee! Now we are in the dark again; and we will alight and walk. The path is too narrow for the carriage, but it will not be far for you. Take your husband's arm."

While he had been speaking a defiant pride had sprung up in her, instigating her to conceal every weakness. He had opened the carriage door and stepped out. She followed, taking the offered arm.

"Take the horse and carriage to the stables," said the viscount to the coachman, who was his own servant, the vehicle and horse being also his.

The coachman turned the horse's head and vanished down the woodland track by which they had ascended.

The viscount moved on, uttering private chuckles as numerous as a woodpecker's taps, and Ethelberta with him. She walked as by a miracle, but she would walk. She would have died rather than not have walked then.

She perceived now that they were somewhere in Lychworth wood. As they went, she noticed a faint gleam upon the ground on the other side of the viscount, which showed her that they were walking beside a wet ditch. She remembered having seen it in the morning: it was a shallow ditch of mud. She might push him in, and run, and so escape before he could extricate himself. It was her last chance. She waited a moment for the opportunity.

"We are one to one, and I am the stronger!" she at last exclaimed triumphantly, and lifted her hand for a thrust.

"On the contrary, darling; we are one to half a dozen, and you considerably the weaker," he tenderly replied, stepping back adroitly, and blowing a whistle. At once the bushes seemed to be animated in four or five places.

"John?" he said in the direction of one of them.

"Yes, my lord," replied a voice from the bush, and a keeper came forward.

"William?"

Another man advanced from another bush.

"Quite right. Remain where you are for the present. Is Tomkins there?"

"Yes, my lord," said a man from another part of the thicket.

"You go and keep watch by the further lodge: there are poachers about. Where is Strongway?"

"Just below, my lord."

"Tell him and his brother to go to the west gate, and walk up and down. Let them search round it, and among the trees inside. Anybody there who cannot give a good account of himself to be brought before me to-morrow morning. I am living at the cottage at present. That's all I have to say to you." And turning round to Ethelberta: "Now, dearest, we will walk a little further, if you are able. I have provided that your friends shall be taken care of." He tried to pull her hand towards him, gently, like a cat opening a door.

They walked a little onward, and Lord Mountclere spoke again, with imperturbable good humour:

"I will tell you a story, to pass the time away. I have learnt the art from you—your mantle has fallen upon me, and all your inspiration with it. Listen, dearest. I saw a young man come to the house to-day. Afterwards I saw him cross a passage in your company. You entered the ball-room with him. That room is a treacherous place. It is panelled with wood, and between the panels and the walls are passages

for the servants, opening from the room by doors hidden in the wood-work. Lady Mountclere knew of one of these, and made use of it to let out her conspirator; Lord Mountclere knew of another, and made use of it to let in himself. His sight is not good, but his ears are unimpaired. A meeting was arranged to take place at the west gate at half-past seven, unless a note handed from the balcony mentioned another time and place. He heard it all—he-hee!

"When Lady Mountclere's confederate came for the note, I was in waiting above, and handed one down, a few minutes before the hour struck, confirming the time, but changing the place. When Lady Mountclere handed down her note, just as the clock was striking, her confederate had gone, and I was standing beneath the balcony to receive it. She dropped it into her husband's hands—ho-ho-ho-ho!

"Lord Mountclere ordered a brougham to be at the west lodge, as fixed by Lady Mountclere's note. Probably Lady Mountclere's friend ordered a brougham to be at the north gate, as fixed by my note, written in imitation of Lady Mountclere's hand. Lady Mountclere came to the spot she had mentioned, and like a good wife rushed into the arms of her husband—hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo!"

As if by an ungovernable impulse, Ethelberta broke into laughter also—laughter which had a wild unnatural sound; it was hysterical. She sank down upon the leaves, and there continued the fearful laugh just as before. Lord Mountclere became greatly frightened. The spot they had reached was a green space within a girdle of hollies, and in front of them rose an ornamental cottage. This was the building which Ethelberta had visited earlier in the day: to be short, it was the Trianon of Lychworth Court.

The viscount left her side, and hurried forward. The door of the building was opened by a woman.

"Have you prepared for us, as I directed?"

"Yes, my lord; tea and coffee are both ready."

"Never mind that now. Lady Mountclere is ill; come and assist her indoors. Tell the other woman to bring wine and water at once."

He returned to Ethelberta. She was better, and was sitting calmly on the bank. She rose without assistance.

"You may retire," he said to the woman who had followed him, and she turned round. When Ethelberta saw the building, she drew back quickly.

"Where is the *other* Lady Mountclere?" she inquired.

"Gone!"

"She shall never return—never!"

"Never. It was not intended that she should."

"That sounds well. Lord Mountclere, we may as well compromise matters."

"I think so, too. It becomes a lady to make a virtue of a necessity."

"It was stratagem against stratagem. Mine was ingenious; yours was masterly. Accept my acknowledgment. We will enter upon an armed neutrality."

"No. Let me be your adorer and slave again, as ever. Your beauty, dearest, covers everything! You are my mistress and queen! But here we are at the door. Tea is prepared for us here. I have a liking for life in this cottage mode, and live here on occasion. Women, attend to Lady Mountclere."

The woman who had seen Ethelberta in the morning was alarmed at recognizing her, having since been informed officially of the marriage: she murmured entreaties for pardon. They assisted the viscountess to a chair, the door was closed, and the wind blew past as if nobody had ever stood there to interrupt its flight.

Full of misgivings, Christopher continued to wait at the north gate. Half-past seven had long since been past, and no Ethelberta had appeared. He did not for a moment suppose the delay to be hers, and this gave him patience; having taken up the position, he was induced by fidelity to abide by the consequences. It would be only a journey of two hours to reach Anglebury Station; he would ride outside with the driver, put her into the train, and bid her adieu for ever. She had cried for help, and he had heard her cry.

At last through the trees came the sound of the Court clock striking eight, and then, for the first time, a doubt arose in his mind whether she could have mistaken the gate. Sol had distinctly told him the west lodge; her note had expressed the north lodge. Could she by any accident have written one thing while meaning another? He entered the carriage, and drove round to the west gate. All was as silent there as at the other, the meeting between Ethelberta and Lord Mountclere being then long past, and he drove back again.

He left the carriage, and entered the park on foot, approaching the house slowly. All was silent; the windows were dark; moping sounds came from the trees and sky, as from Sorrow whispering to Night. By this time he felt assured that the scheme had miscarried. While he stood here a carriage without lights came up the drive; it turned in towards the stable-yard without going to the door. The carriage had plainly been empty.

Returning across the grass by the way he had come, he was startled by the voices of two men from the road hard by.

"Have ye seed anybody?"

"Not a soul."

"Shall we go across again?"

"What's the good? let's home to supper."

"My lord must have heard somebody, or 'a wouldn't have said it."

"Perhaps he's nervous now he's living in the cottage again. I thought that fancy was over. Well, I'm glad 'tis a young wife he's brought us

She'll have her routs and her rackets as well as the high-born ones, you'll see, as soon as she gets used to the place."

"She must be a queer Christian to pick up with him."

"Well, if she've Christian charity 'tis enough for we poor men; her faith and hope may be as please God. Now I be for on-along homeward."

As soon as they had gone Christopher moved from his hiding, and avoiding the gravel-walk, returned to his coachman, telling him to drive at once to Anglebury.

Julian was so impatient of the futility of his adventure that he wished to annihilate its existence. On reaching Anglebury he determined to get on at once to Melchester, that the event of the night might be summarily ended; to be still in the neighbourhood was to be still engaged in it. He reached home before midnight.

Walking into their house in High Street, as dissatisfied with himself as a man well could be who still retained health and an occupation, he found Faith sitting up as usual. His news was simple: the marriage had taken place before he could get there, and he had seen nothing of either ceremony or viscountess. The remainder he reserved for a more convenient season.

Faith looked anxiously at him as he ate supper, smiling now and then.

"Well, I am tired of this life," said Christopher.

"So am I," said Faith. "Ah, if we were only rich!"

"Ah yes."

"Or if we were not rich," she said, turning her eyes to the fire. "If we were only slightly provided for, it would be better than nothing. How much would you be content with, Kit?"

"As much as I could get."

"Would you be content with a thousand a year for both of us?"

"I daresay I should," he murmured, breaking his bread.

"Or five hundred for both?"

"Or five hundred."

"Or even three hundred?"

"Bother three hundred. Less than double the sum would not satisfy me. We may as well imagine much as little."

Faith's countenance had fallen. "Oh Kit," she said, "you always disappoint me."

"I do. How do I disappoint you this time?"

"By not caring for three hundred a year—a hundred-and-fifty each—when that is all I have to offer you."

"Faith!" said he, looking up for the first time. Her soft eyes were curiously turned upon him.

"It is true, and I had prepared such a pleasant surprise for you, and now you don't care! Our cousin Lucy did leave us something after all. I don't understand the exact total sum, but it comes to a hundred-and-

fifty a year each—more than I expected, though, not so much as you deserved. Here's the letter. I have been dwelling upon it all day, and thinking what a pleasure it would be; and it is not after all!"

"Good gracious, Faith, I was only supposing. The real thing is another matter altogether. Well, the idea of Lucy's will containing our names. I am sure I would have gone to the funeral had I known."

"I wish it were a thousand!"

"Oh no—it doesn't matter at all. But, certainly, three hundred for two is a tantalizing sum: not enough to enable us to change our condition, and enough to make us dissatisfied with going on as we are."

"We must forget we have it, and let it increase."

"It isn't enough to increase much. We may as well use it. But how? Take a bigger house—what's the use? Give up the organ?—then I shall be rather worse off than I am at present. Positively, it is the most provoking amount anybody could have invented had they tried ever so long. Poor Lucy, to do that, and not even to come near us when father died. . . . Ah, I know what we'll do. We'll go abroad—we'll live in Italy."

CHAPTER L.

ANGLEBURY.—LYCHWORTH.—SANDBOURNE.

Two years and a half after the marriage of Ethelberta, and the evening adventures which followed it, a man young in years, though considerably older in mood and expression, walked up to the Old Fox Inn at Anglebury. The anachronism sat not unbecomingly upon him, and the voice was precisely that of the Christopher Julian of heretofore. His way of entering the inn and calling for a conveyance was more offhand than formerly; he was much less afraid of the sound of his own voice now than when he had gone through the same performance on a certain wet morning the last time that he visited the spot. He wanted to be taken to Knollsea to meet the steamer there, and was not coming back by the same vehicle.

It was a very different day from that of his previous journey along the same road; different in season; different in weather: and the humour of the observer differed yet more widely from its condition then than did the landscape from its former hues. In due time they reached a commanding situation upon the road, from which were visible knots and plantations of trees on the Lychworth manor. Christoplier broke the silence.

"Lord Mountelere is still alive and well, I am told?"

"Oh, ay. He'll live to be a hundred. Never such a change as has come over the man of late years."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, 'tis my lady. She's a one to put up with. Still 'tis said here and there that marrying her was the best day's work that he ever did in his life, although she's got to be my lord and my lady both."

"Is she happy with him?"

"She is very sharp with the pore man—about happy I don't know. He was a good-natured old man, for all his sins, and would sooner any day lay out money in new presents than pay it in old debts. But 'tis altered now. 'Tisn't the same place. Ah, in the old times I have seen the floor of the servants' hall over the vamp of your boot in solid beer that we had poured aside from the horns because we couldn't see straight enough to pour it in. See? No, we couldn't see a hole in a ladder. And now, even at Christmas or Whitsuntide, when a man, if ever he desires to be overcome with a drop, would naturally wish it to be, you can walk out of Lychworth as straight as you walked in. All her doings."

"Then she holds the reins."

"She do! There was a little tussle at first; but how could a old man hold his own against such a spry young body as that! She threatened to run away from him, and kicked up Bob's-a-dying, and I don't know what all; and being the woman, of course she was sure to beat in the long run. Pore old nobleman, she marches him off to church every Sunday as regular as a clock, makes him read family prayers that haven't been read in Lychworth for the last thirty years to my certain knowledge, and keeps him down to three glasses of wine a day, strict, so that you never see him any the more generous for liquor or a bit elevated at all, as it used to be. There, 'tis true, it has done him good in one sense, for they say he'd have been dead in five years if he had gone on as he was going."

"So that she's a good wife to him, after all."

"Well, if she had been a little worse 'twould have been a little better for him in one sense, for he would have had his own way more. But he was a curious feller at one time, as we all know, and I suppose 'tis as much as he can expect; but 'tis a strange reverse for him. It is said that when he's asked out to dine, or to anything in the way of a jaunt, his eye flies across to hers afore he answers: and if her eye says yes, he says yes; and if her eye says no, he says no. 'Tis a sad condition for one who ruled womankind as he, that a woman should lead him in a string whether he will or no."

"Sad indeed!"

"She's steward, and agent, and everything. She has got a room called 'my lady's office,' and great ledgers and cash-books you never see the like. In old times there were bailiffs to look after the workfolk, foremen to look after the tradesmen, a building-steward to look after the foremen, a land-steward to look after the building-steward, and a dashing grand agent to look after the land-steward; fine times they had then, I assure ye. My lady said they

were eating out the property like a honeycomb, and then there was a terrible row. Half of 'em were sent flying; and now there's only the agent, and the viscountess, and a sort of surveyor man, and of the three she does most work, so 'tis said. She marks the trees to be felled, settles what horses are to be sold and bought, and is out in all winds and weathers. There, if somebody hadn't looked into things 'twould soon have been all up with his lordship, he was so very extravagant. In one sense 'twas lucky for him that she was born in humble life, because owing to it she knows the ins and outs of contriving, which he never did."

"Then a man on the verge of bankruptcy will do better to marry a poor and sensible wife than a rich and stupid one. Well, here we are at the tenth milestone. I will walk the remainder of the distance to Knollsea, as there is ample time for meeting the last steamboat."

When the man was gone Christopher proceeded slowly on foot down the hill, and reached that part of the highway at which he had stopped in the cold November breeze waiting for a woman who never came. He was older now, and he had ceased to wish that he had not been disappointed. There was the lodge, and around it were the trees, brilliant in the shining greens of June. Every twig sustained its bird, and every blossom its bee. The roadside was not muffled in a garment of dead leaves as it had been then, and the lodge-gate was not open as it always used to be. He paused to look through the bars. The drive was well-kept and gravelled; the grass edgings, formerly marked by hoofs and ruts, and otherwise trodden away, were now green and luxuriant, bent sticks being placed at intervals as a protection.

While he looked through the gate a woman stepped from the lodge to open it. In her haste she nearly swung the gate into his face, and would have completely done so had he not jumped back.

"I beg pardon, sir," she said, on perceiving him. "I was going to open it for my lady, and I didn't see you."

Christopher moved round the corner. The perpetual snubbing that he had received from Ethelberta ever since he had known her seemed about to be continued through the medium of her dependents.

A trotting, accompanied by the sound of light wheels, had become perceptible; and then a vehicle came through the gate, and turned up the road which he had come down. He saw the back of a basket-carriage, drawn by a pair of piebald ponies. A lad in livery sat behind with folded arms; the driver was a lady. He saw her bonnet, her shoulders, her hair—but no more. She lessened in his gaze, and was soon out of sight.

He stood a long time thinking; but he did not wish her his.

In this wholesome frame of mind he proceeded on his way, thankful that he had escaped meeting her, though so narrowly. But perhaps at this remote season the embarrassment of a rencounter would not have been intense. At Knollsea he entered the steamer for Sandbourne.

Mr. Chickereel and his family now lived at Firtop Villa in that

place, a house which, like many others, had been built since Julian's last visit to the town. He was directed to the outskirts, and into a fir plantation where drives and intersecting roads had been laid out, and where new villas had sprung up like mushrooms. He entered by a swing gate, on which "Firtop" was painted, and a maid-servant showed him into a neatly-furnished room, containing Mr. Chickereel, Mrs. Chickereel, and Picotee, the matron being reclined on a couch, which improved health had permitted her to substitute for a bed.

He had been expected, and all were glad to see again the sojourner in foreign lands, even down to the ladylike tabby, who was all purr and warmth towards him except when she was all claws and nippers. But had the prime sentiment of the meeting shown itself, it would have been the unqualified surprise of Christopher at seeing how much Picotee's face had grown to resemble her sister's: it was less a resemblance in contours than in expression and tone.

They had an early tea, and then Mr. Chickereel, sitting in a patriarchal chair, conversed pleasantly with his guest, being well acquainted with him through other members of the family. They talked of Julian's residence at different Italian towns with his sister; of Faith, who was at the present moment staying with some old friends in Melchester; and, as was inevitable, the discourse hovered over and settled upon Ethelberta, the prime ruler of the courses of them all, with little exception, through recent years.

"It was a hard struggle for her," said Chickereel, looking reflectively out at the fir-trees. "I never thought the girl would have got through it. When she first entered the house everybody was against her. She had to fight a whole host of them single-handed. There was the viscount's brother, other relations, lawyers, parsons, servants, not one of them was her friend; and not one who wouldn't rather have seen her arrive there in evil relationship with him than as she did come. But she stood her ground. She was put upon her mettle; and one by one they got to feel there was somebody among them whose little finger, if they insulted her, was thicker than a Mountclere's loins. She must have had a will of iron; it was a situation that would have broken the hearts of a dozen ordinary women, for everybody soon knew that we were of no family, and that's what made it so hard for her. But there she is as mistress now, and everybody respecting her. I sometimes fancy she is occasionally too severe with the servants, and I know what service is. But she says it is necessary, owing to her birth; and perhaps she is right."

"I suppose she often comes to see you?"

"Four or five times a year," said Picotee.

"She cannot come quite so often as she would," said Mrs. Chickereel, "because of her lofty position, which has its juties. Well, as I always say, Berta doesn't turn after me. I couldn't have married the man even though he did bring a coronet with him."

"I shouldn't have cared to let him ask ye," said Chickereel. "However, that's neither here nor there—all ended better than I expected."

"It is wonderful what can be done with an old man when you are his darling," said Mrs. Chickereel.

"If I were Berta, I should go to London oftener," said Picotee, to turn the conversation. "But she lives mostly in the library. And, oh, what do you think? She is writing an epic poem, and employs Emmeline as her reader."

"And how are Sol and Dan? You mentioned them once in your letters," said Christopher.

"Berta has set them up as builders in London."

"She bought a business for them," said Chickereel. "But Sol wouldn't accept her help for a long time, and now he has only agreed to it on condition of paying her back the money with interest, which he is doing. They have just signed a contract to build a hospital for twenty thousand pounds."

Picotee broke in—"You knew that both Gwendoline and Cornelia married two years ago, and went to Queensland? They married two brothers who were farmers, and left England the following week. Georgie and Myrtle are at school."

"And Joe?"

"We are thinking of making Joseph a parson," said Mrs. Chickereel.

"Indeed! a parson."

"Yes; 'tis a genteel living for the boy. And he's talents that way. Since he has been under masters he knows all the strange sounds the old Romans and Greeks used to make by way of talking, and the love-stories of the ancient women as if they were his own. I assure you, Mr. Julian, if you could hear how beautiful the boy tells about little Cupid with his bow and arrows, and the rows between that pagan apostle Jupiter and his wife because of another woman, and the handsome young gods who kissed Venus, you'd say he deserved to be made a bishop at once."

The evening advanced, and they walked in the garden. Here, by some means, Picotee and Christopher found themselves alone.

"Your letters to my sister have been charming," said Christopher. "And so regular, too. It was as good as a birthday every time one arrived."

Picotee blushed, and said nothing.

Christopher had full assurance that her heart was where it always had been. A suspicion of the fact had been the reason of his visit here to-day.

"Other letters were once written from England to Italy, and they acquired great celebrity. Do you know whose?"

"Walpole's?" said Picotee, timidly.

"Yes; but they never charmed me half as much as yours. You may rest assured that one person in the world thinks Walpole your second."

"You should not have read them: they were not written to you. But I suppose you wished to hear of Ethelberta?"

"At first I did," said Christopher. "But, oddly enough, I got more interested in the writer than in her news. I don't know if ever before there has been an instance of loving by means of letters; if not, it is because there have never been such sweet ones written. At last I looked for them more anxiously than Faith."

"You see, you knew me before." Picotee would have withdrawn this remark if she could, fearing that it seemed like a suggestion of her love long ago.

"Then, on my return, I thought I would just call and see you, and go away and think what would be best for me to do with a view to the future. But since I have been here I have felt that I could not go away to think without first asking you what you think on one point—whether you could ever marry me?"

"I thought you would ask that just when I first saw you."

"Did you? Why?"

"You looked at me as if you would."

"Well," continued Christopher, "the worst of it is, I am as poor as Job. Faith and I have three hundred a year between us, but only half is mine. So that before I get your promise I must let your father know how poor I am. Besides what I mention, I have only my earnings by music. But I am to be installed as chief organist at Melchester soon, instead of deputy, as I used to be; which is something."

"I am to have five hundred pounds when I marry. That was Lord Mountclere's arrangement with Ethelberta. He is extremely anxious that I should marry well."

"That's unfortunate. A marriage with me will hardly be considered well."

"Oh, yes, it will," said Picotee, quickly, and then looked frightened.

Christopher drew her towards him, and imprinted a kiss upon her cheek, at which Picotee was not so wretched as she had been some years before when he mistook her for another in that performance.

"Berta will never let us come to want," she said, with vivacity, when she had recovered. "She always gives me what is necessary."

"We will endeavour not to trouble her," said Christopher, amused by Picotee's utter dependence now as ever upon her sister, as upon an eternal Providence. "However, it is well to be kin to a coach though you never ride in it. Now, shall we go indoors to your father? You think he will not object?"

"I think he will be very glad," replied Picotee. "Berta will, I know."

THE END.

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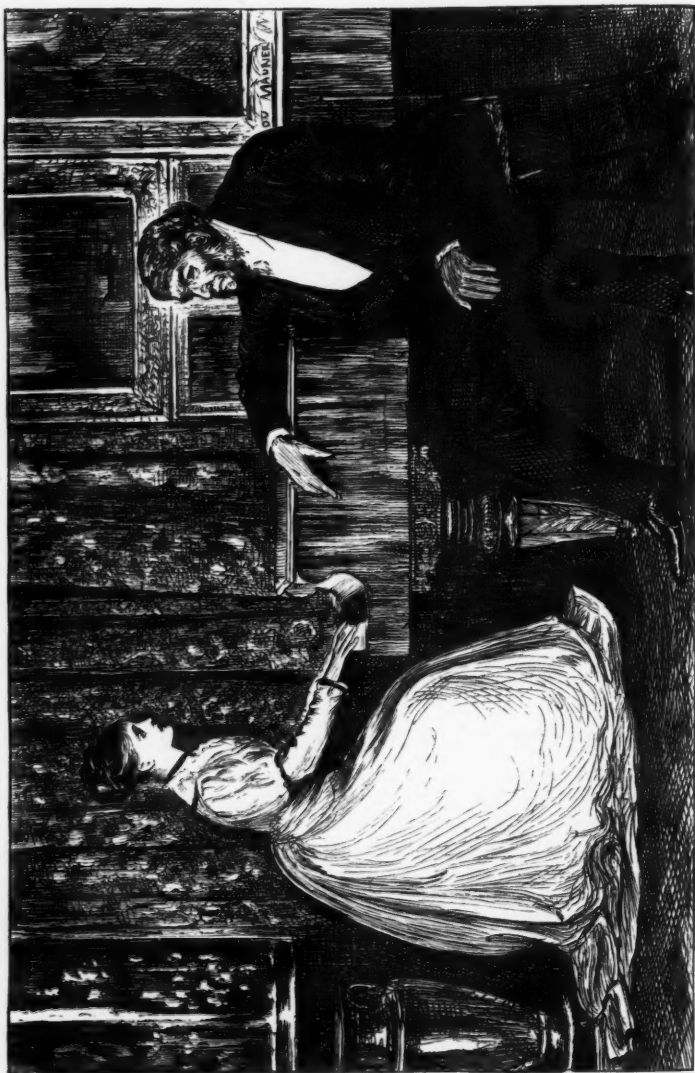
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